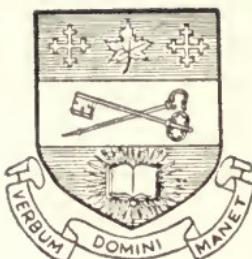


WYCLIFFE COLLEGE LIBRARY



3 1761 02871 2628



The Leonard Library

Wycliffe College
Toronto

Shelf No. BS 2695 M91
G8C

Register No.

19





Grace and Godliness

*STUDIES IN THE EPISTLE TO THE
EPHESIANS*

8136

BY

H. C. G. MOULE, B.D.

PRINCIPAL OF RIDLEY HALL, CAMBRIDGE
AUTHOR OF 'THOUGHTS ON CHRISTIAN SANCTITY,' ETC.

'He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my Name.'—ACTS ix. 15

LONDON
SEELEY AND CO. LIMITED
ESSEX STREET, STRAND

1895

55
2615
1111
630

45003340 ✓

PREFACE

EARLY in the year 1894 proposals and invitations were issued for a gathering of clergy at Cambridge in the Long Vacation, with a view to the delivery of courses of lectures on theological subjects. The gathering took place in the month of July, when about one hundred and twenty clergymen were present in Cambridge, and the announced lectures were read day by day in the Divinity School. At the kind request of the Professors and Committee I undertook an expository course, and on four successive mornings read upon the Epistle to the Ephesians. Those readings, slightly recast and carefully revised, make the eight chapters of this little volume.

This original occasion of the writing of these ‘studies’ will explain some features of their

present form, such as the assumption throughout that the reader is a Christian Minister, and generally the free use of citations from the Greek and references to ancient and modern Church writers.

There is little need to anticipate in a Preface the allusions made in the book to its own manifest and inevitable incompleteness. The writer's best hope for his publication is that it may serve in some measure as a help and guide towards work far better than his own, in the way of direct Scriptural research, the direct interrogation of the Heavenly Book concerning its messages from God. It is to be feared that at present, amidst the clatter of many criticisms, there is a serious risk lest that 'marking, learning and inwardly digesting,' for which the Scriptures were given to us, and which can alone give an adequate basis to spiritual convictions worth the name, may fall out of fashion. A greatly exaggerated attention (such it seems to me to be) to the human aspects of the Bible is now prevalent; and this

by no means tends to promote that use of the Word Written which was followed by our Lord and the Apostles when the Old Testament was in their hands. But to that use we must assuredly come back, unless we are seriously prepared to revise the Christianity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Among the other wonderful phenomena of the Ephesian Epistle, let us not forget its witness against a humanitarian study of the Person of our Master.

Here is a letter written by a Christian missionary to representative Christian converts in a centre of evangelization, at a time when the life of the Man of Nazareth was still fresh in hundreds of living memories. Yet that Man is present to the writer and to the readers not under the conditions of His earthly sojourn, when His Form had for its background the society and scenery of Galilee and Judea, but altogether in the fulness of the wonder and the glory of heavenly being and power. He is ‘far above all heavens.’ He

'dwells in the heart by faith.' His 'love passeth knowledge.' He is the divine Bridegroom of His disciples, regarded in their unity as the mystic Bride. They died and rose with Him ; nay, they are enthroned beside Him. He is all in all to them for their deepest needs, and for their most exalted hopes. Such is this primeval Christology.

But now let these brief Studies on 'Paul's celestial Letter' speak for themselves. Or rather may the Apostle's Lord be pleased to use them, such as they are, speaking through them to His disciples something 'concerning Himself.'

H. C. G. M.

November 22, 1894.

CONTENTS

I

- Purpose of the Studies—The Epistle is a divine Scripture—Its genuineness and authenticity—Doubts on these points—Reply, and reflections on the subject, Page 1

II

- Date of the Epistle—It was written at Rome—And probably late in St Paul's first imprisonment there—In what sense was it addressed 'to Ephesus'?—Ussher's and Lightfoot's treatments of the problem—'The Epistle from Laodicea' was our Ephesians, 17

III

- Occasion of the writing of the Epistle—St Paul's residence and pastorate at Ephesus—The 'Colossian Heresy'—Its apparent characteristics—This Epistle was written to meet it in advance—By a full presentation of the glory of Christ, 37

IV

- The subject pursued—The supreme place of Christ in the Epistle—How this met the special spiritual danger in view—Significance of this for our own day—The possible scene and details of the writing of the Epistle, 55

V

The Epistle approached for direct study—As if it were a newly discovered document—Its doctrine of the Eternal Father—His Primacy—Dr A. Bonar's illustration—The Father's Creatorship—Wrath—Sovereignty—Love—His relation to the redeeming Son—In Whom alone we can meet Him in peace—His relation to the Holy Spirit, Page 73

VI

The account in the Epistle of the Father's relation to the Church—Examination in detail of ii. 8, 9—His glory manifested through the Church—Children of God—Temple of God—The doctrine of the Epistle about the Holy Spirit—*Veni Creator*, 94

VII

The Epistle examined for its account of the Christian—Not the unusual but the normal Christian—His privileges and inner experience—Eternal provision made for him—He 'begins fallen'—His recovery and blessings in Christ—Session in the heavenly places—All is mercy—His salvation complete from one view-point, progressive from another—These truths are facts for us in our day, 113

VIII

The account in the Epistle of the Christian's life—The law of holiness—Holiness the 'final cause' of faith—The Christian is before all things humble—Why this must be so—Yet not without will and tone—Truthful—Pure—Watchful—Serviceable—'A Puritan life'—The Christian home—Slavery—Lessons from the policy of the Gospel towards slavery—The conflict of the Christian with evil powers—Conclusion—Renan's estimate of St Paul—The believer's estimate of him, 132

Grace and Godliness

STUDIES IN THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

I

Purpose of the Studies—The Epistle is a Divine Scripture—
Its genuineness and authenticity—Doubts on these points
—Reply, and reflections on the subject.

IN this and the following studies in the Epistle to the Ephesians a simple programme is before me. The purpose next my heart, in the whole series, has to do with exposition and devotion. To this sort of study our full attention will be given in the last four chapters, and not a little of it in the two preceding them. From these first it will not be felt to be absent, if the spirit and direction of thought is such as, under God, I would have it be. But the chief business

of this chapter and the next will be to state and review some of the literary problems presented by the great Epistle. After this we shall attempt the discussion of its probable immediate occasion. There will then remain the work of more direct exposition, not of the Epistle as a whole, but of some of its greater topics. No words need be wasted over apologies for the inevitable imperfections of the treatment. Even in other hands than mine, eight chapters on the Ephesian Epistle must needs be fragmentary at the best.

Throughout the work may we be kept mindful, by the grace of God, what it is that we are studying. This writing is not only a document of human thought, of surpassing depth and elevation and moreover of consummate form. In it we are also in presence of 'the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.' Such from the first has this letter been to the Church of Christ; such it will be to it even to the end of days, unless the Church leaves the apostolic path for ventures and explorations without a

warrant, and without a hope. The man who addresses us in these immortal pages was indeed a man; we shall trace at every turn his wonderful manhood of thought, feeling, and utterance. But then he is also everywhere the ‘chosen vessel to bear his Lord’s name.’ Jesus Christ had gone about to mould this man, even in his days of acutest unbelief. Then at length, in open miracle, He conquered him and annexed him for His own; and then He mysteriously revealed Himself and His salvation to him; and then, as the goal of it all, He committed to him, in an unparalleled measure, the work of expounding His Gospel to the world. Did He who thus selected, and formed, and commissioned St Paul, leave him alone for one moment when he was actually engaged in the appointed work? Surely the Lord of the Prophets, whether of the Old Testament or of the New, did not deal with them as the old Deists would have us think that God deals with His creation. He did not make them, and mould them, and then let them run alone. Far

different is the implication of those words, 'He that heareth you, heareth Me'; 'If they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also' (Luke x. 16; John xv. 20).

So while we attend to the Epistle with all the literary insight that we can bring to it, and investigate its Pauline characteristics just as we should try to test the characteristics of a letter of Pliny's, or Bernard's, or Luther's, or Cowper's, we shall always look also on it as we should not look on those others. We shall listen to it as to the oracle of God, commanding our acceptance, and, exactly in proportion to that claim, sustaining our faith and our hope. Not all the noblest literature in the world, outside Scripture, were it rolled into one utterance, would have power to require our submission; nor therefore could it be the firm basis of our definite and final reliance. The Holy Scriptures have that power. And just there lies their everlasting difference from all other literature, actual or possible. In that remembrance comes the an-

swer to many current confusions of thought which lurk, for instance, in loose and wandering uses of the term Inspiration. The question is one of authority. Only that word which has a right to command me has power, ultimate and adequate, to sustain me.

We approach this holy Scripture, then, as we would approach every other, above all things as the Word of God. To use the remarkable phrase of Gregory the Great, in his letter to Theodore, chief physician to the Emperor Maurice, on the duty and blessing of Bible study (*Epistles*, iv. xiii. 40), we come to 'learn God's heart in God's words,' *cor Dei in verbis Dei*. Yes, *verba Dei*, though also *verba hominis*. They are always, and as truly, 'man's words'; as truly, *but not as importantly*; not so as for one moment to disturb from its place the primary fact that they are the oracle of the Lord. So we thankfully use in this particular instance the words which we English pastors heard in the hour of our ordination. The Bishop then laid

it upon the new presbyter ‘continually to pray to God the Father, by the mediation of our only Saviour Jesus Christ, for the heavenly assistance of the Holy Ghost, that by daily reading and weighing of the Scriptures ye may wax riper and stronger in your ministry.’

But now a few words on the literary preliminaries to our study; on authorship, date and destination.

The evidence of early Christian writers to the Pauline authorship of the Ephesians is, I hardly need say, ample and unbroken. Ignatius, probably, in his own Ephesian Letter, shows that he had this of Paul’s before him. Irenæus certainly treats it as the unquestioned work of St Paul. ‘The beatified Paul,’ writes he in an interesting context (v. 2, 3), ‘says, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, “*We are His body’s limbs, of His flesh, and of His bones*”; speaking thus . . . of the Incarnation (*oikouomia*) of the true Man.’ And again (in a passage, i. 1, 8, im-

portant as an aid in deciding the translation of Ephesians v. 13, *πᾶντας τὸ φανερούμενον*), he writes that St John ‘called the Life of men Light, because men have been enlightened by the Life, that is to say, formed and manifested by it. This too, Paul says, *πᾶντας γὰρ τὸ φανερούμενον φῶς ἐστίν*: ‘All,’ so manifestly we should render, in the quotation, as in the Epistle, ‘all that is being manifested (not “all that doth make manifest”) is light.’ As the generations passed, the reception of the Epistle was, so far as we know, absolutely undisturbed. No whisper is to be heard of a suspicion, of an objection, as to its Pauline origin, amidst all the ample freedom of the early literary controversies of the kind. Renan himself (of whom more later) remarks that probably no New Testament book is more extensively quoted by early writers.

On the other hand modern students, from more than one point of view, have questioned or denied the Pauline authorship of Ephesians. Baur of Tübingen, and more recently Holtz-

mann, of Strasburg, and Renan, to mention only these eminent names, will have none of it. To the school of Tübingen it presents more than one difficulty. The supposed internecine conflict of ‘Paulinism’ and ‘anti-Paulinism,’ alleged to have raged all through and beyond the apostolic generation, is practically ignored by the Epistle to the Ephesians; and surely Paul was a loyal, if not an eager, Paulinist, and could not have been quite so peaceably silent! And then the ‘*powers*’ and ‘*aeons*’ of the Epistle—are not these the true dialect of Gnosticism? So Ephesians could not have been written till the Gnostics had made head a long while. The Epistle, then, is an imitative expansion of Colossians, composed long after. Or it is a pseudo-Pauline writing, borrowing by the way from Colossians, or from some older and truer Epistle to Colossæ than that which we have hitherto called Colossians. So some of the Germans. Renan’s objections are more of the literary kind. He is sure it is not

St Paul's own work. But he thinks, with hesitation, that it may have been written under his eye, by Tychicus or by Timothy. Wonderful to say, he finds unmerciful fault with its composition. It is *une épître banale*, a third-rate sort of Epistle—‘diffuse, nerveless, loaded with repetitions, entangled with foreign matter, full of pleonasm and confusion’ (*Saint Paul*, p. xviii., etc.). Dr Salmon by the way (*Introduction to N.T.*, p. 487), with his usual common-sense, not unmixed with humour, observes that ‘questions of taste cannot be settled by disputation ; but a critic may well distrust his own judgment if he can see no merit in a book which has had a great success. And I do not think that there is any New Testament book which we can prove to have been earlier circulated than this, or more widely esteemed.’

Renan’s literary instinct does not always thus fail him. It often leads him, on its own ground, straight to the conclusions of common sense across a maze of artificial difficulties

which have led scholars less practised or less gifted as original writers to doubt where no doubt is. But as the Christian reads this curiously shallow and flippant critique on the Epistle to the Ephesians, and strives, amidst his pain and shame, to be just to the critic, he has not far to go for the reason of the failure Renan's penetration, and his feeling for literary form, are in their own way wonderful. But they are spoiled even for purely literary purposes by his absolute lack of sympathy with what we Christians mean by spiritual experience. His *esprit*, for all the vein of melancholy which gives it what depth it has, has no affinity with 'the Spirit.' He never can get beyond the thought, at best, of 'repose in an ideal.' And this blinds him to the conspicuous richness of contents and nobility of form of the Ephesian Epistle; for both contents and expression are full to overflow of the truths which issue from the glory of the Eternal Spirit.

Far different is the verdict of Samuel Taylor

Coleridge, in whom a true spiritual insight coincided with the special gifts of a philosopher and poet; 'The Epistle to the Ephesians,' says he (in *Table Talk*), 'is one of the divinest compositions of man.' And it is interesting to place beside this fervent utterance the deliberately expressed conclusion of the late Dr Hort: 'In Ephesians we find no tangible evidence against St Paul's authorship. . . . It bears the impress of his wonderful mind.' And we recall, too, the brief energy of Lightfoot's words: 'The attempt to question the authenticity of the Epistle is quite useless; it is thoroughly Pauline.*

Let me call in another honoured voice, long silent now, the voice of one who had truly steeped his mind in that of St Paul. 'To all the difficulties of authorship,' says Howson (*Character of St Paul*, p. 146, note), 'there is the one sweeping reply, that no one but St Paul could have been the writer.' And the reply is

* These last two quotations are made from memoranda of lectures.

as pertinent, from the literary point of view, as it is certainly sweeping. Who could have been the writer, the writer of this long-acknowledged masterpiece of thought and soul, if not St Paul? It was a piece of authorship certainly old when Irenæus lived: So it must have been produced within the first century, or only just outside it. Who then, between the Apostles and Irenæus, was this man who wrote it? It must have been a personage in whom were united at once a large versatility of expression, a great power of close and suggestive reasoning, a heart capable of conceiving and expounding on the one hand the most rapturous views of the glory of Christ, and on the other hand of enforcing the homeliest details of Christian morals—(let us observe with the utmost attention *that* coincidence). And all this he possessed, on the hypothesis, along with a feeling for truth and honour so extremely low that he could set himself to construct his message under a false name, and to throw over it, or rather into it, the glamour of a personated

experience and affection ; with the apparent intention of an absolute and permanent concealment of himself ; which, in effect, he has perfectly achieved. This would be an astonishing person at any age and in any region in the history of letters. But, on the hypothesis, this rare being was found within the narrow and comparatively uncultured circles of the primeval Church. A man with a fine genius for literary personation (although literary personation is an art which, if I do not mistake, has never been practised with anything like mature skill till quite modern times) must have existed then and there—and must have lain, in that small field, altogether invisible to his coevals. Aye, and a greater paradox still ; he must have been at once a consummate fabricator (and has the public opinion of any age thought fabrication, for whatever ends, a thing to honour?) *and* a man capable of writing things about the work and glory of Christ, and the Christian's path of transparent righteousness, which have been ever since treasured as spiritual

wealth by the Church of God. Is not the hypothesis of truth, and of St Paul, the more credible? And it is the only alternative.

I have dwelt at some little length on this point, not only for the sake of the immediate topic, but because it is a typical matter. In the present state of Scriptural study, under conditions often quite inevitable, and some of them beneficial, an intense critical attention is directed to the literary and historical minutiae of the holy Books. Now this makes it often necessary to resolve with special decision not to forget the forest in its trees; to stand back deliberately, and to ask whether the passage, the chapter, the book, the Testament, in its total, answers to alleged unfavourable deductions from the details. It is necessary sometimes to remember, in a direction not always noticed, that the Book of God was written, whenever and wherever, by men; not instantly to draw the conclusion, which seems to be the first thought now when the human aspect of Scripture is in view, that

humanum est errare. Rather, we have to remember that it is human to have a conscience and a heart; and that there are evidences of the soundness or otherwise of a writing which cannot be fully seen where that is forgotten.

Further, to repeat what has been hinted already, it seems to be forgotten sometimes that the personation of the past in fabricated narrative, and the personation of character and experience in fabricated compositions of other kinds, is, in the history of literature, a process which only the latest ages have developed into anything like commanding success; I mean the sort of success which will resist a simple literary scrutiny. Men of the keenest critical faculty in some directions, and with the amplest literary equipment, may yet however forget this. The evidence for date and authorship seems to be sometimes studied as if the whole matter were one of abstractions and unembodied principles, and as if no human soul, or souls, were in the midst of it. So in this instance; to criticize the credentials of the

Epistle to the Ephesians without the gravest and most sympathetic thought upon the implied *morale* of the man, whoever he was, who wrote it, must ensure fallacies in the conclusion. It would be an instance of a species of *idolon*, which is, I think, by no means uncommon—the *idolon bibliothecæ*. To exorcise it, we must know the human soul, and use our knowledge. And also, where it haunts the precincts of religion, we must, to banish it indeed, know the God of the Prophets and the Apostles, and use our knowledge of Him in life.

II

Date of the Epistle—It was written at Rome—And probably late in St Paul's first imprisonment there—In what sense was it addressed 'to Ephesus'?—Ussher's and Lightfoot's treatments of the problem—'The Epistle from Laodicea' was our Ephesians.

FROM the authenticity of the Epistle we turn to the question of the narrower limits of its date. Where was it written, and when in the Apostle's life? I answer, well remembering the other conclusions that have been drawn, at Rome, and at a time late in St Paul's Roman imprisonment recorded in the Acts. As to the place, it was undoubtedly a place where the writer was a prisoner; 'I therefore the prisoner of the Lord'; 'an ambassador in bonds.' This alone does not necessarily hold us to Rome; for Cæsarea by

the Sea (Acts xxiv. 27) was also the scene of a two years' imprisonment. Meyer, and more recently Weiss, have argued elaborately for Cæsarea as the place of writing of Ephesians, and of course of Colossians also. The question is complicated somewhat as to date by the connexion of Colossians with Ephesians. For the great earthquake of Colossæ is placed by Tacitus (*Ann.* xiv. 27) in our year 60. And St Paul did not reach Rome till 61. And he says nothing to the Colossians about earthquakes. But could he write to Colossæ in 61, or later, and be thus silent? And if so, could he have written Ephesians so late as 61? And if not, then he could not have written it from Rome.

But the premisses of this argument are at best precarious. It is at least very likely, as Lightfoot (*Colossians*, Introd. § i.) has carefully reasoned, that Tacitus dates the convulsion some years too early, and that it fell on the unhappy valley of the Lycus after St Paul

had left his Roman lodging. Putting this aside, I would venture only to say that no one argument for Cæsarea seems to me to approach conclusiveness. If so, is it unreasonable to say that the Roman captivity is *à priori* the more likely time for the writing of these Epistles? Not only was the Apostle, at Rome, placed in a position highly stimulating to thought, and where the news of the missions he had founded would reach him with great freedom. But also, when the two years at Cæsarea were over, he was separated by so much more time from the days when he was moved to write the great group of Epistles to which Romans and Corinthians belong. Ephesians and Colossians are self-evidently, as compared with those Epistles, new in contents, new in the aspect of the Gospel which has moved into view before the Apostle's soul. Never does he lose hold of what he has taught before. But he mounts with it now to another point of view. He carries the treasures of Propitiation, Justification,

Righteousness by faith, forward now, to place them in living connexion with the treasures of the truth of the glorious Head of the living members; with Christ and His Body, Christ and His Bride. He clasps still, and for ever, to his heart the wonder and glory of our acceptance in the merits of the Crucified. But now he looks also, even more intently and adoringly than ever, upon the personal majesty of the Bearer of those merits; upon His riches unsearchable, His love that passeth knowledge, His pre-eminance in all things, and His indwelling in the heart by faith. Now is it not more likely than not that the inspiring Lord led His servant to this new and wonderful stage of insight and teaching after the longer rather than after the shorter interval? The imprisonment at Cæsarea followed almost continuously, we may say, upon that sojourn at Corinth which saw the writing of Romans. The imprisonment at Rome came after just such an interval, so long, and spent in such

retirement, as would seem likely to herald and prepare the new period of illumination.

It would certainly be a mistake to treat the question as one for demonstration. Dr Hort has warned us not to do so; 'the evidence,' he says (in the MS. memoranda referred to previously), 'is curiously scanty.' And happily the inquiry carries with it no direct spiritual importance. But I may repeat without presumptuous assertion my persuasion, upon the whole review, that the Roman 'hired house' of Acts xxviii. 30 saw the writing of the Epistle to the Ephesians.

Further, I cannot but think that the Epistle went to Asia late, not early, in the two years spent at Rome. My main ground for this belief is the reasoning of Bishop Lightfoot (*Philippians*, Introd. § ii.) in favour of his belief that St Paul wrote to *Philippi* not at an advanced stage of his Roman sojourn, but somewhat soon after his arrival. Hort, I am aware, has said that 'Lightfoot's view has found few friends'; and he does not seem to be one of them. But

Lightfoot surely has two most powerful supports in the phenomena of the Philippian Epistle. First, we have the great dogmatic passage of Phil. iii., the Apostle's confession of his rest and refuge in the 'righteousness which is of God by faith.' This type of thought and diction is like an echo in Philippians of Romans and Galatians, far rather than of Ephesians or Colossians. True, it would be idle to say that the Apostle would never, after a certain date, freely express himself in his own heaven-taught phraseology of justification; to assume this would be precisely to forget the *humanity* of this writer of Scripture, an oblivion against which I protested in the last chapter. But then I do reverently believe that St Paul's Inspirer led him, *in his utterances to the Church*, along an ordered course of truth. And in this view it seems to me more likely that the great epistolary message of Philippians was given him in sequel to that of Romans and Galatians, rather than in sequel to that of Ephesians.

Then further, the Philippian Epistle indicates a state of things in the mission-church at Rome which, to say the least, agrees perfectly with the hypothesis that St Paul was *a recent* arrival in the city. He speaks of the converts as being powerfully animated to a bolder work and witness—not, observe, by any special appeals or reasonings of his, but simply ‘by his bonds’ (i. 13, 14). ‘The whole Prætorian guard’ ($\ddot{\sigma}\lambda\omegaν \tauὸ πρατώριον$), and *oi λοιποὶ πάντες*, ‘people in general,’ were getting to know that ‘his bonds’ were ‘in Christ’; in other words, that he was a prisoner, not because of personal and political crime, but because of the faith of the predicted Messiah. Is it likely that such things would have been said, would have been experienced in the Roman mission, *far on* in the two years? By that time the mere fact of St Paul’s presence as a prisoner, apart from striking events connected with it, would have lost much of its interest and power. But at first it would be otherwise. At first the fact of his being at

Rome in prison was everything. Here I find forcible evidence for an early date (in the first Roman captivity) of Philippians. But if so, Ephesians and Colossians, assuming them to be written at Rome at all, *come later*; I should venture to say (looking at their difference from Philippians), as much later as we can put them, say in the early days of 63.

There remains to be noticed only one of the literary points which I can hope to touch. It is the familiar question whether or no the Epistle was addressed distinctively to the Ephesian Church at all, and was not rather a missive to the Asian communities in general, or at least to a circle of them.

We are aware of the phenomena which occasion the question. There is a general phenomenon and a particular one. There is first the large and obvious fact that our Epistle, though Ephesus was the scene of St Paul's longest continuous residence, and of a work full of personal incident,

is remarkably devoid of allusions to place, and person, and special circumstance. It is in fact more of a discourse than a letter; pregnant indeed with the individuality and experience of the writer, but dealing with the readers only on common grounds of hope, duty and difficulty. Under this heading we may note the detail that, in iii. 2, he actually uses the phrase, '*If so be that ye have heard* of the dispensation of the grace of God given unto me'; as if the fact of his apostleship to the Gentiles were to them only a matter of report. Here however we have a difficulty which proves, if anything, too much. For if it is incredible that *the Ephesians* should only have 'heard' of his great commission, it is only a little less, if at all less, incredible that the other Asian Missions should only have 'heard' of it. In fact, this difficulty is best met by remembering that there is such a thing as a gracious irony, which can introduce a conspicuous fact, and make it all the more conspicuous, by treating it as a novelty where it is familiar, as a rumour where it is an

experience. Still, the Epistle beyond question contrasts strongly with, for instance, Philippians, and with Colossians, in the complete, or almost complete, absence of reference to the individual and local at its destination.

Then there is the particular phenomenon, the problem of the text of ch. i. 1. Do the words '*at Ephesus*' rightly stand there or not? Are we to read *τοῖς ἀγίοις τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Ἐφέσῳ*, κ.τ.λ., or are we to read *τοῖς ἀγίοις τοῖς οὖσι, καὶ*, κ.τ.λ.? The MS. evidence for the omission of '*at Ephesus*', *ἐν Ἐφέσῳ*, is very scanty, though certainly important. The words are wanting in the Vatican and Sinaitic uncials; and they are corrected out in the cursive copy called '67 of St Paul,' in which the corrections are important. Further, St Basil the Great (i. 1254 e) says that 'the older copies,' *τὰ παλαιὰ τῶν ἀντιγράφων*, consulted by him omitted the words. All existing MSS., so far as we know, except the three named, and all ancient versions, exhibit the words '*at Ephesus*'. And *every* known MS. reads '*To the Ephesians*'

(or words to that effect) as *the title* of the Epistle. If this were all the evidence to be adduced on either side we could not doubt the right of the words '*at Ephesus*' to stand undisturbed, though the phenomenon of omission, even in those few known copies, and in the others indicated by St Basil's reference, might be perplexing.

But here comes in the fact that quite a catena of early writers—Tertullian, Origen, Epiphanius, Basil the Great and Jerome—indicate in one way or another that the theory of a non-Ephesian destination was known to them, whatever they thought about it. Tertullian complains that Marcion 'interpolated' for our Epistle ('which, by the Church's verity, we possess as sent to the Ephesians') the title '*To the Laodiceans*' (*c. Marc.*, v. 17); a fact which suggests at least the possibility that in the second century copies were in circulation which did not read '*at Ephesus*' in i. 1. For Tertullian's account of Marcion's action does not suggest that he touched *the text*, but only *the title*; and he surely would

not have altered the title and left ‘*at Ephesus*’ in the text, within the next few lines of the MS., to contradict his new title. Again Origen, quoted in a Catena, and speaking of our Epistle as that to the Ephesians, expressly comments on the unique fact (so he calls it) that St Paul there writes *τοῖς ἀγίοις τοῖς οὖσι*, ‘to the saints that are,’ not that are in this place or that, but absolutely, ‘that are’: and characteristically he finds a mystery in it, an allusion to the Christian’s part and lot in the Eternal Being, so that in the ‘I AM’ they are those who can truly say ‘WE ARE.’ The same thing is said by St Basil in the next century, with only the difference that he, unlike Origen, recognizes the existence of both readings, while he appears to prefer the shorter as the older. Lastly, St Jerome, commenting on the verse, recites this mystical interpretation, and dismisses it as *curiosius quam necesse est*, ‘needlessly far-fetched.’ And then he says that ‘some think the words to be written quite simply, not to those who are, but

to those who are at Ephesus'; a sentence which leaves us in tantalizing perplexity whether these 'some' actually read '*at Ephesus*' in their text, or whether they interpreted it into their text, and whether Jerome personally regarded '*at Ephesus*' as the true reading. The impression left is that the question must have been an open one to him when he wrote his comment.

Twelve hundred years after Jerome, James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh, the most learned man of a learned age, following out the apostolic story in his *Annales Novi Testamenti* (A.M. 4068), comes to the sending of Tychicus to Asia, and writes thus: 'By Tychicus Paul wrote [sent] the Epistle to the Ephesians, which Epistle Tertullian, as also Epiphanius, under the 42d [*i.e.*, the Marcionite] heresy, tells us was put about (*venditata*) by Marcion the heretic, under the name of the Epistle to the Laodiceans. This, Grotius thinks, Marcion may have done on the warrant of the Laodicean Church, for Marcion could have had no motive (so Grotius

says) for fraud in the matter. Hence, on the same line, Grotius gathers that the letter was written at once both to the Ephesians and to the Laodiceans. Here we must note that in some ancient copies (as it is plain from Basil against Eunomius, and from Jerome's commentary here) this Epistle was addressed in general terms, *τοῖς ἀγίοις τοῖς οὖσι καὶ πιστοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ*, or (as is usual in the address of letters encyclical), "To the saints who are . . . and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." As if the letter had been sent first to Ephesus, as the chief metropolis of Asia; to be transmitted thence to the other Churches of the same province, the name of each being inserted in its instance. To some of these latter, which Paul had never seen, he may have had chief regard in such words as these: "Having heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus," etc.; and, "If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me," etc. Perhaps Marcion thought that such words suited the Laodiceans, who had never

seen the Apostle in bodily presence, better than the Ephesians, with whom he had so long held intercourse.'

I give Ussher's paragraph in full, as a luminous statement and comment, as presenting a sagacious conjecture, and also as being characteristic of the wide and thorough reading of the Archbishop.

Surely the solution of the curious problem lies before us here in its essentials. So Lightfoot felt. In the Lectures (1862) which were the basis of his edition of Colossians, he reviewed the data with his usual care and clearness, and arrived at what he calls (in the MS. notes before me *) 'a modified form of the view first set forth by Archbishop Ussher.' All the modification he would make is to emphasize, more than Ussher has done, the probability that many copies would carry the words *ἐν Ἐφέσῳ* as their filling up of the address; that many would leave the address unfilled; and that in transcripts from these the

* See also Lightfoot's *Biblical Essays*, § x.

blank would soon come to be obliterated. So would arise the reading, *τοῖς οὖσι καὶ πιστοῖς*, written continuously.

If, with reverence to my dear college tutor Lightfoot, I may add a word to his solution, it shall be this. Something more than I find in his remarks seems to be needed to account for the practically universal tradition of the *Ephesian destination* of the Epistle. May not this something have been as follows? St Paul did indeed mean the Epistle for Asia ultimately. But the very close connexion between Ephesus and the Province led him to address it in the first instance to Ephesus. But it was to Ephesus, not as the mission-station but as the provincial capital; the trustee for all the out-lying missions. For them transcripts would of course be made, at Ephesus; and in many of these, if not in all, the *ἐπέστω* would be omitted, perhaps without any substitute; the blank might be supplied at each place tacitly.

In such a view, if I am right, we have both

sides of the problem fairly accounted for; the non-local character of the Epistle, and the fact that it somehow attached itself so peculiarly to the city.*

That in the Ephesian Epistle we have 'the Epistle from Laodicea' of Col. iv. 16, I feel sure. So Grotius and Ussher thought, and so Lightfoot (*Colossians*, pp. 347, etc., ed. 1875) has, we may fairly say, demonstrated. It will be observed that the Apostle does not speak of an 'Epistle to,' but of an 'Epistle from, Laodicea'; a Letter which was to reach the converts of Colossæ by way of the important city which was the capital of their district, and whose mission would be responsible for the distribution. Colossæ had indeed its own inestimable Epistle. And that Epistle had been, in

* Prof. Godet, in his recent *Introduction to the Epistles of St Paul*, discusses the destination of this Epistle with his usual care and skill (pp. 365, etc., Eng. Trans.), and reaches somewhat different results. But I think the conclusions advocated here are unshaken.

all probability, the splendid sketch from which the great picture of Ephesians was in some sense developed. But the wonderful Encyclical would not therefore be superfluous at Colossæ. Great elements of truth had appeared in it which had not been unfolded in the shorter and more local Letter; above all, the truths which gather round the revelation of the Eternal Spirit. For these they must reverently search the larger scroll which would be brought to them up the vale of the Lycus from Laodicea. These truths they must place in their connexion with the truth which their own Epistle had so powerfully emphasized—the glory of the Lord Christ, the Son of God, as Cause and Head of the whole creation.

Of Him indeed, of CHRIST as He is seen in His unspeakable exaltation, when ‘the Spirit shines upon the Word,’ and the soul by the same power is conscious of its vast need of Him, both these Asian Epistles are full, and now for us especially the Ephesian Epistle. We

have been attempting to collect and review some exterior phenomena of the document. But as we began so let us end, with a deliberate remembrance of what it is when seen from within. It is, if with reverence we may transfer to a divine writing what its own pages say about the blessed company of believing men, and about the secret place of the believing soul,—it is ‘an habitation of God in the Spirit.’ It is a temple where Christ dwells, and where ‘every whit of it doth speak His glory.’ As in the companion Epistle so indeed in this, ‘in all things He hath the pre-eminence.’ Eternal, Historical; Divine, Human; dying, but behold He is alive for evermore; Inmate and Householder of the heart, Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, and His fulness; Lord of all the bright orders of the angelic world, infinitely tender Answerer to the disciple’s love; King of all developments of the eternal future, unseen but living Centre of the Christian home; first and last, all in all; such is Jesus Christ for

Ephesus, for Asia ; such, blessed be His most sacred Name, is He for us.

In our next chapter we will consider more fully the occasion, and the probable immediate circumstances, of the writing of the Epistle.

III

Occasion of the writing of the Epistle—St Paul's residence and pastorate at Ephesus—The 'Colossian Heresy'—Its apparent characteristics — This Epistle was written to meet it in advance—By a full presentation of the glory of Christ.

WE have devoted our attention thus far to the literary preliminaries to the Epistle to the Ephesians. In this further study we shall consider those circumstances of the Asian converts which apparently occasioned the message, and to the personal surroundings of the writer as he actually addressed himself to the writing.

(i.) The apparent circumstances of the intended readers of the Letter. Those readers, after yesterday's inquiry, we will take to be primarily the converts of the great mission-station at Ephesus, but with them also those

resident at what the modern missionary would call the out-stations of the district. Such were Colossæ, Laodicea, and Hierapolis, the three points of Christian light in the valley through which Lycus, 'the Wolf-water,' hastens to its confluence with Mæander. We may reckon also, as already containing 'Churches,' for certain in some cases, in others probably, the towns of Smyrna, Pergamus, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Troas, Assos, Adramyttium, Miletus and Troyllium. All these are places named in the apostolic Scriptures, and all lay within the limits of Proconsular Asia.

I need only in the briefest way recall the account in the Acts of St Paul's three years' continuous residence (Acts xx. 18, *τὸν πάντα χρόνον μεθ' ὑμῶν ἐγενόμην*, 'I was with you the whole time through') at Ephesus. During that stay, while thus practically stationary himself, he yet, according to his hostile critic Demetrius, as well as in St Luke's own narrative, not at Ephesus only but 'nearly all over Asia' (*σχεδὸν πάσης τῆς*

'Ασίας, Acts xix. 26; St Luke speaks yet more strongly of πάντες οἱ κατοικοῦντες τὴν Ἀσίαν, Acts xix. 10) spread the message of Christ. We remember well the little group of disciples of the Baptist with whom he began, and on whom he was permitted to shed the 'gifts;' the three months' work in the synagogue; the decisive and critical removal of the converts from the hall of Tyrannus; the immense labour of the long remainder of the stay, in which by deputed Evangelists (like Epaphras) he reached the other places of the province, and was himself always ready to meet the innumerable visitors who habitually flocked from the province to the city. We remember the abundant miracles, especially the victories over possessing spirits; the counterfeit of these by the sons of Sceva; the astonishing day when a vast literature of unhallowed 'arts,' to the grief of antiquarians perhaps but to the glory of God, was burnt 'in the sight of all.' The agitation of Demetrius and his fellows we recall here only as it evidences the enthusi-

astic and dangerous fanaticism which gathered round the Ephesian Artemis. It is a scene without any parallel in the Acts, unless indeed we seek one in the temple-courts of Jerusalem ; at Corinth, at Philippi, at Thessalonica there is nothing like it. The closing Ephesian incident in the Acts is the gathering at Miletus of the Ephesian presbyters ; it shows us in these representative converts men capable of a deep and pathetic affectionateness.

We go from the Acts to our own Epistle, and to Colossians, and we gather that in his Asian disciples St Paul found an intelligence and also a warmth which invited him to open to them the very depths and heights of the Gospel. He freely leads them into the heavenly arcana of eternal grace, and redeeming love, and rich experience, in words whose grandeur of outline and argument is impressively combined with a tenderness of appeal and application impossible where there is less than perfect sympathy between teacher and disciples.

His long residence at Ephesus, and the intimate pastoral intercourse to which he alludes in his farewell words at Miletus, would seem to have made him intensely conscious in Asia of the life of Christian *homes*. No doubt he could recall among his immediate converts many a beautiful example of that masterpiece of the Gospel, a human home animated all through with the faith and love of the Redeemer; and he would fain see every hearth of the disciples adorned and beautified in all its surroundings with the same lovely light. It has been remarked, by the way, that in the missions of Asia the Gospel in its *homeward* aspect would be powerfully aided by one great local characteristic, the high place and influence of Woman in Asian social life. Much more than in some other missions, the evangelist there would find the mother a powerful, indeed a primary, influence and authority among her children, and with her for centre the home bond would be deep and strong. There were terrible contraries

to this favourable fact. Nowhere in the old pagan world was the association of bodily impurity with idolatrous worship so intense as in Asia Minor. Inscriptions are quoted (see Ramsay, *The Church in the Empire*, p. 398) which record, as a thank-worthy incident of the votary's life, her having spent a certain period in divinely-suggested prostitution. And, apart from such mysteries of sanctioned sin, the Levant was then as now a favourable soil, certainly in its cities, with their motley population, and in that luxurious climate, for a rank growth of moral corruption. Yet Asia did present, even from the view-point of nature, this brighter side, this instinct of affection and home. We may compare the fact that at the present day in France, in merciful contrast to the prevalence of neo-paganism and its moral fruits, we find splendid instances of a prevalence also of the influence of the home and the mother; a reluctant statesman is brought to

accept the dangerous throne of the President * by the *ultima ratio* of his mother's appeal.

We may trace the *pastoral intimacy* of St Paul with Ephesus and Asia in other directions besides that indicated by the domestic passages of our Epistle and Colossians. Nowhere else does he enter with the peculiar kind of fulness we find here into the holiness of common Christian intercourse in general. To be sure there is rich material in all his Epistles for our study on that surpassingly important side of Christian life. We can gather ample material from Thessalonians, from Corinthians, to enforce the call to the believing disciple totally to abstain from evil and unreservedly and impartially to practise good in matters of the temper, in the use of time, in cleanness of thought and speech, in a recollection of the sacredness of mutual sincerity, and of the greatness in Christ of the commonplaces of human social relation. But I do not think we find these precepts either in the same remarkable quantity elsewhere, or given

* Midsummer, 1894.

with exactly the same manner — a manner so minute, so pressing, yet so intimate, so affectionate—as that in which they appear in Ephesians and Colossians. God be thanked then for those three years of local pastorate to which He called His servant at Ephesus in the very midst of the wider work of restless evangelization. To that period of close and stationary converse we owe, if I conjecture aright, these precious applications of eternal truths to literally our commonest intercourse and most week-day duties. To them we owe this fullest and tenderest of all apostolic reminders that nothing in the Christian's life is for one moment meant to lie outside Jesus Christ; that he is hallowed all through and all over, and therefore in all his relations and functions, to the Lord who has bought him, and enlightened him, and in faith and love, by the eternal Spirit, has joined him to Himself.

But we still have to examine the probable special occasion which prompted the writing of

Ephesians. The call to domestic and social holiness in Christ was not a critical *occasion* for writing, though it was an abiding matter for the missionary's prayers and counsels. The critical occasion, if we see at all aright, is to be found just outside our Epistle, in that to the Colossians. A special peril to Christian faith had, somehow or other, invaded the mission in the old country town of Colossæ. In its acute form it was, apparently, local there. It may indeed have already affected the much larger Laodicea, Colossæ's near neighbour and district capital (Col. iv. 16); still, it is to Colossæ, not to Asia, nor to any other station in it, that St Paul directly writes against this invasion of misbelief. But the evil was of course only too capable of quick diffusion. And this diffusion would best be met in advance. If so, the surest meeting of it would be by way of a clear and full, but not yet controversial, statement of the great revealed facts which it assailed, distorted, or obscured. Hence the Epistle to the Ephesians

It was suggested by the mischief at Colossæ, and in a sense it sprang out of the Epistle to Colossæ. It is the larger and more ‘encyclical’ discourse on truth and duty, with a special reference to imperilled faith ; designed not so much to confute as to provide against the propaganda which had begun (we cannot now know why just there) with the smallest of the missions on the Lycus.

What was the ‘Colossian Heresy,’ as we may infer its nature from the Epistle written expressly to refute it ? It was apparently a new thing in its kind in St Paul’s experience of ‘other Gospels, which were not other.’ Hitherto he had encountered persistent opposition from the Pharisaic party in the Church, an opposition continued up till quite recent days, in his Roman captivity, if we placed Philippians aright in our first Lecture. It was this indefatigable counter-mission which had called out the Galatian and Roman Epistles. It was this which was met in them by the exposition once and for ever of the

sublime paradox of justification by faith alone and holiness by the power of the Spirit, received also by faith alone, and then applied to life with all the insight of the regenerate will. Those Epistles have in immediate view the Rabbinic disputant, though dressed in the Christian garb ; we seem to see him, with his pride of privilege and pedigree, his ceremonial rigorism, his wistful quest of a righteousness of his own, constructed of observances and achievements, his consequent inward restlessness and weakness, his failure of assurance, his lack of peace with God, his internal separation from the divine secret of spiritual victory over the devil, the world and the flesh. It was the mistaken votary of the true God (mistaking, while he thought he accepted, the central message of the Christ of God) whom St Paul sought to meet in Galatians and Romans with those great watchwords —the Righteousness of God upon all them that believe ; Death by the Law to the Law ; Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ; Justi-

fication freely by His grace; Life lived in the flesh by faith in Him; Liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free; the Promise of the Spirit received by faith; the Witness of the Spirit with our Spirit; the Abba, Father, 'that cry of faith alone.'

But now a mischief emerged which, with some permanent elements of likeness, had a profound difference in it too. There was now a speculative as well as a ceremonialist element. There was the fascination of reverie along with an appeal to Moses and the past; a claim to satisfy the cravings of thought as well as, or perhaps much more than, to quiet the importunity of conscience.

Lightfoot, in his *Colossians* (Introduction, § ii.), has discussed 'the Colossian heresy' with even more than his usual fulness and care, and incidentally has written an essay on the Essenes whose completeness is still, I believe, unrivalled in any language. Hort (in Lectures of which memoranda have been kindly lent to me) has

criticized some points in Lightfoot's resultant theory, inclining, so far as I understand him, to see not much more than a variation of Pharisaism in the false teaching at Colossæ. But I must confess that for me Lightfoot's main positions are unmoved. The tone and direction of the Colossian Epistle itself seem conclusive proof that the Epistle was directed against a really different type of error from that which attacked Galatia. Two or three points stand out above all others in this regard. One is the reference in Colossians to angelic powers. Another is the reference to 'neglect of the body.' Another, and that a supreme point, is the great passage in chapter i. in which the unique glory of the Son of God is set forth; 'His eternal pre-existence, while yet He is the Son; His relation to His believing Church, not as Prophet only, nor even only as Mediator, but as Head, in all the significance of that word; and Head not of His Church only but of the created Universe in all its ranks and

orders, seen and unseen. The Galatians were attacked by an error which, distorted and undervalued Christ's finished work and perfect gifts. The Colossians must have been attacked by an error which, consciously or not, assailed His Person. It was undoubtedly more or less Judaic, but it also carried in it at least the seeds of what afterwards came out in history as Gnosticism. We seem to gather, as we ponder Colossians i., ii., that those Asian disciples were invited to become, up to a certain point, strict ascetics, with at least some of the Judaic rules to guide them (ii. 16, 20-23), and apparently (ii. 11) with circumcision for their initiation. But then they were also asked to become mystics, to receive an esoteric doctrine, to think of the unseen world in its hidden depths, to listen to teaching about intermediary existences between them and the Supreme, to lose sight of the eternal and historical Lord Jesus Christ behind, or at best in the midst of, a pantheon of 'principalities and powers' filling

the gulph between them and the Supreme. This, if the facts were so, was the later Gnosis, in its essentials.

To meet this class of error directly the *Colossian* Epistle was written. The motto of its great dogmatic message is the personal glory of Christ the Son of God, Head of the Church, Head of the Universe, Son of the Father's love. Never, of course, here or elsewhere, does St Paul forget Christ's work, His finished work. 'He made peace by the blood of His Cross' (i. 20). 'He nailed to His Cross the handwriting of ordinances that was against us' (ii. 14). But the glorious speciality of the message, its immediate burthen, is the unutterable greatness of the Person whose work that is, and from whom the work gets its virtue. The work appears now not so much as the magnificently legal satisfaction of the broken law (which it is, for ever,) as the divinely natural outcome of the interposition of—such a Person. And the Christian as an individual, and the body of the Christian

Church, are now more prominently regarded as vitally related to this Person's life-giving Headship than as sheltered (as they are, for ever,) under the righteousness of His merits. I would repeat once more what I said above, so great is the importance of the remembrance, that never does the Apostle forget, for Colossæ, the eternal foundation - truths which he has explained to Galatia, and to Rome. A true and adequate theology of justification, though the word and its cognates are never used in either writing, might be constructed from Colossians, and abundantly from Ephesians. No step, however brief, is ever taken by the Apostles away from the precincts of the Cross; no substitute is ever suggested by them for the profound simplicity of faith in the Lord who died for our sins, the Just for the unjust, the *ἀντίληυτον*, the substituted Ransom, in our stead. But then, while resting there, they discourse also, as occasion calls, upon the vast truths which in their full glory can only be seen from thence, and which they lead

us thither to see; the Sonship and the eternity of the Lord; His vital as well as His legal relation to His people; His wonderful headship; His 'pre-eminence.'

Long years ago, I heard the late Dean Howson describe his recollection of one of the last sermons preached by the Rev. Charles Simeon in Trinity Church in Cambridge. His text was Col. i. 18: 'That in all things He might have the pre-eminence.' The old man—he was already seventy-six—seemed, as he discoursed to a great multitude on the beloved theme of his Lord and Redeemer, to rise and as it were dilate into youthful stature. With all the fire that burned in him to the end he burst into an exposition quite unconventional: 'That He might have the pre-eminence! And He *will* have it! and He *must* have it! and He *shall!*'

Such, but along with the calm majesty of apostolic revelation, is the tone of the Colossian Epistle. The ascetic theosophists were to be met by the pre-eminence of Christ. Christ's unapproach-

able glory and preciousness, for the universe, the Church, the soul; for pardon, for holiness, for heaven; this was to be the overwhelming answer.

IV

The subject pursued—The supreme place of Christ in the Epistle—How this met the special spiritual danger in view—Significance of this for our own day—The possible scene and details of the writing of the Epistle.

Now do we not rightly see in the Epistle to the Ephesians the less direct but still fully intentional reply to the ‘Colossian heresy’? It is a reply *in advance*, and therefore less explicit, but still a reply. As we read the first chapter, the second, and the third, the personal glory of Christ glows through all. The mighty theme is treated indeed, in Ephesians, if I may say so with reverence, under wider and more elaborate adjustments than in Colossians. Observe the great space (this will be reviewed more fully in the next chapter) given in Ephesians to

the purpose and action of the Eternal Father; to this we have no complete equivalent in Colossians. Observe again in Ephesians the mass of truth given us about the Eternal Spirit; this feature is quite absent from Colossians. (I can hardly doubt that, as I hinted before, it is mainly with a view to this all-important supplement—the doctrine of the Spirit—that St Paul asks the Colossians to get and read ‘the Epistle from Laodicea,’ *i.e.*, if we think aright with Ussher, our ‘Ephesians.’) We observe again that the thought of the Church is very largely developed in Ephesians from the comparatively brief mention of it in Colossians. ‘The blessed company of all faithful people’ is viewed in this sublime picture as lifted almost wholly above the limitary conditions of time. It shines before us even as it is visible in its ultimate reality to God. It appears as a body in which every member lives, with life indeed; in which every part contributes effectually to the vitality of the whole. In its individuals

alike and in its total it follows now and for ever the line of a pre-temporal and sovereign electing grace. It obeys everywhere the touch of the sealing Spirit. It receives into every heart of all its membership the indwelling Lord. It is developing and ascending (ii. 21-23) with infallible precision towards the hour in which it will eternally be God's 'habitation in the Spirit.' The Apostle cannot leave the possessing theme. He has to speak, and that with the utmost practicality, of the sanctities of Christian marriage ; and behold he gives us, by the way, that tenderest of revelations (v. 22-32), the Song of Songs in its New Testament interpretation, where the Lord Christ 'nourisheth and cherisheth,' 'as His own flesh,' His Bride, this wonderful Church, the Church which He loved, for which He gave Himself, and which hereafter He will present to Himself all glorified (*ἐνδόξον*) in the open Bridal of heaven.

But these great developments of revelation

and instruction about the Eternal Father, and the Eternal Spirit, and the living universal Church, are all, for the main purpose of the Epistle, grouped around and illuminated by the revelation of the glory of Christ. The purpose of the Eternal Father is above all things the glorification of His Son, and of Himself through Him and through His Son's fair Bride. The work of the Holy Spirit is above all things, for the individual, to strengthen the will (iii. 16) for that entire surrender of faith which opens the door to the lasting indwelling of Christ in the heart, and so to the experience of His love which transcends all knowledge. For the Church, the function of the Spirit is so to rule every member as to secure the real oneness (iv. 4) of the whole organism under the blessed Head, the exalted Christ. And the life and glory of the Church vitally depends upon its growing up (iv. 15) in its every member, in all things, 'into Him.' To Him it is 'subject' (v. 24). The Church is 'His fulness,' His $\pi\lambda.\dot{\eta}\rho\omega\mu\alpha$

(i. 22), that is to say, the sphere of the realization of all His purposes, the means for the manifestation of all His grace. Such is Christ to the Church that (if with humblest reverence it may be said) the Christ of God, regarded in His official glories, is 'not Himself' except as He is in union with His true and living Church. For her He is indeed all things in all things. Is she Bride? He is Bridegroom. Is she Temple? He is Cornerstone (ii. 20). Is she Body? He is Head (i. 22), not only to think and order, to preside and rule, but also and with everything else to minister life (iv. 16), and every moment to be her Safe-keeper (v. 23). The vital requisite for all her members is to hear Him, to be taught in Him (iv. 20), to have their 'hearts' eyes' opened (i. 18) that they may know the mighty import of His resurrection and of His exaltation far above every name named in this world and the next, and His headship, and His individual indwelling (iii. 17)—not fitful but permanent (*κατοικησαι*)—in the heart. Is the

believing company regarded as the subject of an eternal choice? ‘We were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world’ (i. 4). It is regarded in its present union with the now historically exalted One? Its members were once spiritually dead (ii. 1), dislocated from God in the Fall, children of wrath — exposed to that infinite divine repulsion of all that is not in harmony with God which the Scripture calls His wrath. But they were (ii. 10) ‘created’ (a new creation) ‘in Christ Jesus, unto good works.’ This wonderful Christ so took them into relation with Himself that He gave Himself for them in death (v. 2), so that they are ‘made near in His blood’ (ii. 13); God ‘in Him’ forgave them (iv. 32); Christ’s resurrection was as theirs, and even His ascension was as theirs, in respect of this most sacred union of Church and Lord (ii. 6); where He is, and because He is there, there are His living members, in the sense that they are welcomed in Him now to the very heart of the Father,

and, in the Father's purpose, are already glorified in His glory. He is *with them*; yes, no further off than in their hearts, by faith. But also they are *with Him*, no lower down than 'in the heavenly regions' in their Lord (ii. 6). As to experience, they find His riches to be unsearchable (iii. 8). They have perfect freedom of utterance (*παρησια*) through Him in an unhindered approach to the Father (ii. 18; iii. 12). They are light in Him their Lord (v. 8). They love Him *ἐν ἀφθαρσίᾳ* (vi. 24), with a pure, immortal, genuine love, discovering His illimitable love to them. In Him already they, believing, may boldly say *σεσωμένοι ἐσμέν* (ii. 5, 8), 'we have been saved,' 'by grace.' And all the means and ways by which that salvation is worked out for them into realization are of and for Him. The 'laver of water' (v. 26), which signifies and seals the bridal union, is His. From Him, as the gift of His ascension, comes the ordered Ministry which leads and shepherds them (iv. 8, etc.), and (as to its main function, so we

learn, iv. 12) aims to equip and stimulate all 'the saints' for their 'ministration'— $\pi\rho\delta\varsigma\tau\circ\eta\chi\alpha\tau\pi\sigma\mu\delta\varsigma\tau\circ\eta\alpha\gamma\iota\omega\varsigma\epsilon\iota\varsigma\tilde{\epsilon}\rho\gamma\varsigma\delta\iota\alpha\chi\omega\iota\alpha\varsigma,\epsilon\iota\varsigma\omega\chi\omega\delta\mu\eta\eta\tau\circ\eta\sigma\omega\mu\alpha\tau\omega\varsigma\tau\circ\eta\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\circ\eta$ —'to the furnishing forth of the saints for (their) work of service, for (their) upbuilding of the body of Christ.'

I have thus attempted to indicate with some fulness of detail the place in Ephesians of our Lord Jesus Christ. The result is quite imperfect of course. For in order to any completeness of appreciation we need to read the whole Epistle, with the light of its Inspirer upon it. So seen, Christ radiates from it all. He is the One Beloved of the Eternal Father; He is the one peace, life, law, joy and hope of the saint, and of the Church. On Him the man rests, in Him he moves. By and to Him he lives, alike in the inward life of faith and in the exterior things of neighbourhood, of service, of mastership, of marriage, of parentage, of all that is meant by home. Surrounded by personal powers of spiritual evil (vi. 14, etc.), the Church, the Christian, is

strong only in Him, armed with Him. Watched by personal powers of good (iii. 10), the Church is the revelation to them, ‘to the principalities and powers in heavenly places, of the manifold wisdom of God, according to the plan of the ages (*κατὰ πρόθεσιν τῶν αἰώνων*) which He planned in Christ Jesus our Lord.’ It is not too much to say that the whole Epistle, as it falls obviously into the two main sections of Spiritual Truth (i.-iii.) and Spiritual Living (iv.-vi.), may be summed up in the two corresponding mottoes, Christ our Salvation, Christ our Law. ‘In all things’ indeed ‘He hath the pre-eminence’ here.

It is thus that St Paul, apprised of the theosophic ceremonialism which had infected Asian Colossæ, prepares Ephesus and Asia in advance to throw it off. He pours into their spiritual system, into all their thought and all their life, the glory of Christ. To the unwholesome and unlawful intrusions into the unseen which were the temptation of numberless minds then, as

they are now, and more and more acutely so now as a second paganism makes its way in our nominal Christendom, he opposes beforehand this absolutely unique Object of knowledge and of faith, of reason and of adoration. He uplifts Jesus Christ our Lord, historical—for He died and rose; eternal—for we were chosen in Him before the world was founded; the purpose of all ages was laid in Him; His wealth cannot be tracked out; His love transcends for all our knowing. St Paul presents Him to the Asians in his relation *to our sins*, in their guilt; that point which not only theosophy by its nature tends to ignore but which unilluminated human thought in general likes to avoid. He speaks of our ‘death in trespasses and sins,’ and of divine wrath, and of a forgiveness, an acceptance, vitally connected with the Blood, the Cross, the Lord’s giving of Himself for us.

Here were antidotes alike to the slumbers of reverie and to the deep exhaustion incident to all efforts after moral purity which are un-

related to atoning grace. He meets the requests of the soul for insight into eternal secrets by unfolding something better than visions of angelic mediation with its countless arches of an impossible bridge between the finite and the infinite; he shows them Jesus Christ, spanning at once that gulph in His real oneness with both its sides. He shows them this Lord Jesus Christ the Father's Beloved, the divine King of Angels, the Head and Life of believing man, as not only the central Fact of an immovable creed, but the mysterious while genuine Experience of the believing soul. Here was an *esoteric* life indeed; only it was entered by an open door, on which was sprinkled the atoning blood; and it was flooded from within by the daylight of truth and of pure love.

Then he brings the whole directly home into the realities of human life. The system which he had in view, and against which he would guard the Asian saints, never really gravitated towards the realities of life, nor could do so

Alike its mysticism and its ceremonialism tended away from the simple but inestimable charities and sanctities of common things. They tended to lodge saintship in an ambitious speculative insight, or in a distorted and misdirected physical asceticism, or in both. The Jesus Christ of history, and of heaven, bore at once and always upon the smallest and most common things of the day, as well as upon the past or the future of an eternal plan. In Him the same disciple who found that inmost secret, 'Christ dwelling in the heart by faith,' would find, once rightly directed, that other secret, how to live quite through the next common human day delivered from self-will, humble and modest pure and true, punctual and faithful in relationship and intercourse; 'doing the will of God' in these things 'from the soul' (vi. 6). Yet the two secrets, that of the blissful experience and that of the serving life, were one secret at the root. They resided not in an idea, but in a Person. It was all the Lord Jesus Christ.

Is it out of place to press the significance of this great phenomenon of the Ephesian Epistle, in view not only of the needs of Asia long ago, but of those of our own life to-day? Amidst many dangerous symptoms of this age, two, pregnant with great hurt to the glory of Christ in Christendom, are already prominent. The one is a powerful drift towards a disproportioned *externalism*, not only in modes of worship but in modes and aims of activity and enterprise. The other, natural child of the unlawful parentage of an age of materialistic denials, is a diseased *internalism*, a restless craving for strange commerce with the unseen. Prevalent far and wide below the surface of our Christian society, that surface which heaves and often breaks asunder with forces of rebellious thought and will, it is at least possible that the next generation, at latest, may find this dark rival of Revelation threatening and aggressive around the Church. Only a few weeks ago I read the report of an occasion when, in a place

of Christian worship, and under the presidency of its pastor, the apostoless of modern theosophy, the enthusiastic and able woman who, once a materialist, now preaches in India and England the creed of Mahatmas and of astral bodies, gave by invitation, and with a welcome, a discourse upon her faith. If this is possible already, what will be done in the dry tree? Now I dare to say that there is only one adequate antidote for our day, as for St Paul's, in view of these complicated wanderings of life and thought in matters of religion. It is the glorification of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Christ of the Holy Scriptures, the Christ, let us say now, of the Epistle to the Ephesians. For us pastors and teachers this is the work above all others, in our ministerial utterance and in our ministerial walk. We must 'preach Christ Jesus as Lord' (2 Cor. iv. 5), and Christ Jesus as Life, and Christ Jesus as Law. We must lead our brethren by every means of word and work to understand and know HIM, in His glory of

Person, of Office, of Work, of Power, of Love. We must labour to give them insight into Jesus Christ God and Man, Jesus Christ living and dying, dead and risen again, glorified, enthroned, mediating, dwelling in the heart by faith, and coming again. And we must labour at the delightful but solemn work of applying this same Lord to the facts and duties of life, in the state, in the mart, in the school, in the home, and, below yet also above all, (for without this all else is vain, if people would but see it,) in the will, the life, the man.

Other things ought we to do. But in the name of every need of our age let us not leave this undone. Let us labour at the glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the true God, Head of the living Church, Dweller in the believing heart, that He may live and work in the life that issues from it among men.

ii. Only in a few lines do I touch the subject of the personal surroundings of the writer as he

composed the Epistle. And this will be enough; for in this matter we have little to do but to indulge an innocent pictorial liberty, that we may just touch our study of the Epistle with some local colour.

So we will call it a spring day in the year 63, when Favonius is beginning to breathe, and the seas to open, and Tychicus, who has been long at the Apostle's side, is preparing to travel from Italy to Asia. The place, we will say, is a floor, a flat, in some block of building near the great camp of the Guards (*castra prætoriana*) outside the eastern wall of Rome. There is the 'hired lodging' of St Paul. His window looks out over what is now the grey-green sea of the Campagna; it was then a landscape brilliant with white villas, and woods, and little towns. He sits to dictate; he is not able, as once, to move freely, to walk as he speaks, for that long chain of iron links fastens him day and night to the sentinel who is his enforced companion; some-

times no doubt a reckless, ribald, and most unwilling companion, but to-day, we will suppose, one of the many who assuredly learnt Christ from Paul in those hours of infinite opportunity. Observe the fast aging Missionary; the small, slight frame is bent and battered; the eyes are dim, and troubled with disease; but there is an ethereal air in the arches of the brow, and a wonderful power and tenderness in the mobile lips.* Yonder is Epaphras beside him; he has been talking again of Colossæ and the Lycus, and of the needs and dangers, as well as of the loving life, of the believers there. There on the other side is Tychicus, with the pen of reed and the strips of papyrus, ready to do the writer's part. Beside him lie two finished scrolls, the Letter to Colossæ and the Note to Philemon. The saints have worshipped. They are sure of the Lord, of His

* I get my suggestions from the medallion, probably of the second century at latest engraved in Lewin's *Life of St Paul*, ii. 411.

glory, and of His love. The Apostle knows that he has received his Gospel 'not of man, nor through man, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ' (Gal. i. 1, 12). And in the calm assurance of his commission, and of the eternal truth, he dictates his letter to Ephesus for the missions of Asia.

V

The Epistle approached for direct study—As if it were a newly-discovered document—Its doctrine of the Eternal Father—His primacy—Dr A. Bonar's illustration—The Father's Creatorship—Wrath—Sovereignty—Love—His relation to the redeeming Son—In whom alone we can meet Him in peace—His relation to the Holy Spirit.

WE have now in some sort examined the main literary and historical questions raised by the Epistle. In our last study particularly an answer was attempted to the question why precisely the Epistle was written. In the course of that answer we have already, of necessity, reviewed some of the contents of Ephesians, and primarily that large and glorious element, the witness of the Epistle to the pre-eminence, all-necessity and all-sufficiency of Christ.

In the space which now remains I shall ask

my reader to come directly and explicitly to the teaching of the Epistle; to scrutinize the pages with reverent care for their treasures of truth and of life, not for historical but for spiritual purposes. In the present chapter and in the next to it I propose to examine the testimony of Ephesians on one or two great matters of belief. In our final studies we shall collect and review its account of the true disciple's true life.

In this simple enterprise of research let us give a little exercise to our imagination, taking a perfectly lawful direction, with a view only and directly to the assistance of thought and faith. Let us imagine, so far as we can—of course imperfectly at the best, but so far as we can—that in the Epistle to the Ephesians we have not, as we have, a document incorporated from the first into the open volume of the Christian Scriptures, but one which has been recently disinterred from ages of oblivion. Let us try in some measure to regard it, for our

purpose, as if it were in this respect like *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, the recovery of which a few years ago awoke so deep and eager a curiosity in all studious Christian circles, and far beyond them; or again like *The Apology of Aristides*, which more lately has occasioned a similar stir of inquiry. For us to-day this letter shall be a new thing, a 'find,' brought lately from some sepulchre in Egypt or from the library of some Asiatic monastery. It has been examined and tested, and it bears on its face, and in its depths, proofs of its origin in the apostolic age, nay, the seals of the authorship of St Paul. With something like the minute attention and animated interest which such conditions would instantly excite we will take up again our Ephesian Epistle, and ask it what it says.

I need not apologize for the thought. The whole thing is of course a case of the *per impossibile*. Not only can no mental effort quite make the thing which is so sacredly familiar

really seem to us thus crudely new; but in supposing the discovery now, after ages of slumber, of an apostolic Epistle, great and authoritative, we suppose what is forbidden alike by the history of the Church of God and by faith in the providence of the God of Scripture. But we may, for a purpose, try to imagine *anything*. And our purpose here is just to shake off, if we may, something of that use and habitude which lets us too readily 'take' Scripture 'as read,' even while we are reading it. We want to brush away the dust of an otiose familiarity from the sacred Word, that we may read the divine legend in a sharper definition, and in all its lines. We would remind ourselves thus by an artificial shock of what is all the while, thank God, the present and lasting fact. We would realize afresh that we *have* here before us nothing short of the message of our Master, given through His own contemporary Delegate, telling us what to believe and how to live.

To scrutinize thus the Epistle to the Ephesians for its theology at large would not be possible in our short space. Nor indeed would it be necessary. I speak in these pages as to brother-teachers, fellow-ministers of the Word of God. All I need is to offer what such readers may think worth the hearing by way of specimen and suggestion, to be bettered in their own inexhaustible work of pastoral teaching, as they may please, or rather as they may be led by our heavenly Master's hand.

Here then I take up our *new-found* Epistle, and scrutinize it as a primeval, apostolic informant on two great topics of Theology, in the strictest sense of that much misused word, Theology. We will trace its doctrine of the Father, and then, in the next chapter, its doctrine of the Spirit. May the light of the Spirit, by the mercy of the Father, rest upon our brief study.

i. The Doctrine of the Epistle concerning the Eternal Father.

I select this infinitely sacred article partly because in our last study we were much occupied with the doctrine of the Epistle concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, Whose sacred Name in its majesty and divine endearment is, as I sought to show, the immediate watchword of Ephesians. Christ is indeed everywhere in it, and on purpose. And assuredly He is seen in it as being, while Human and Historical, also Eternal and Divine. His Godhead is nowhere explicitly affirmed, but it is everywhere assumed. With the Father He is the Giver of grace and peace (i. 2). He fills all in all (i. 23). His love passes knowledge (iii. 19). To love Him in spiritual purity (vi. 24) is the breath of the Christian life. In Him 'the purpose of the ages' resides, and is to be eternally developed (iii. 11). Such a Being cannot be too absolutely trusted, too humbly adored, too unreservedly and everlastinglly delighted in by the human soul. But that is to say that He is, in the proper sense, Divine. When it is *a Scripture*

that makes these claims for Him, the claim means Deity.

But exactly therefore it is all-important to read the Epistle for its doctrine of the Father.

' Hail, son of God, Saviour of men ; Thy name
Shall be the copious matter of my song
Henceforth, nor ever shall my harp Thy praise
Forget, nor from Thy Father's praise disjoin.'

So sings the great poet, rightly.* He glorifies Christ, but only so as to glorify in Him the Father. And all true Theology contributes its music to that strain. We remember indeed, with thanksgiving and worship, what St Chrysostom has nobly said, commenting on Philippians ii. 11, that our utmost thought of the glory of Christ, our magnification of our Saviour-God above all heights and heavens, is all the while necessarily a tribute to the Father; for what must HE be who is the true and eternal Father of such a Son? But then we remember too that we need, *deliberately and*

* *Paradise Lost*, iii. 412.

consciously, worshipping the Son, to direct our worship so; to bear in our minds not only His glorious Godhead but his most blessed Filiation. He is Eternal; He is Necessary. He in His supreme Nature is as infinitely different from creaturehood as is the Father. But then, in the sphere of uncreated Being, He is, necessarily and eternally, the Son; He is '*of* the Father.' So, to glorify our beloved Lord without continual reference of our love and praise to the Father through Him, is an aberration from His own Gospel; and it may bring grave spiritual loss to the worshipper, where he least thinks of it.

I recall, from some four or five years ago, a discourse by that true saint of God, the late Dr Andrew Bonar. To his soul, at once deep and full of sunshine, Christ was indeed all in all. At fourscore he would speak on all occasions of Him in whom he lived (and whom now he beholds in the heavenly rest) with more than the beautiful warmth of the 'first love.'

But therefore, so it seemed to me, he all the more delighted to pass on in due order to the theme of the love and glory of his Lord's everlasting Father. He had been lately reading, when I met him, Mr Stanley's striking account of his passage near the great range of Ruwenzori, the source of the abundant waters of inner equatorial Africa. Only now and then in the year do the worlds of mist roll away from those giant hills; the descending floods rush down their channels as if born directly of the clouds. But then, in some rare and favourable hour, the veil rises, and you see the snows of the vast and radiant heights, the majestic cause of the rivers and the fertility. Somewhat thus it is with the Christian, said my venerable friend, when he gets, in the Word of God, under the light of the Spirit, through the Name of the beloved Son, some sight of the glory of the Father, some view of Him in His life, His will, His love, His power. He sees the ultimate Source of all the waters of the life eternal.

But now again to the Epistle, and its deliverance on this first Article. What does our newly-discovered document say to it? We shall find the word 'FATHER' often as we turn the pages; and often also we shall find the word 'GOD' used in connexions which point, more or less obviously, to the Father in personal distinction from the Son. On this use of the word 'God' Pearson remarks (*Exposition*, p. 40, margin): 'The name of *the Father* speaks nothing of dependence, nor supposeth any kind of priority in another. From hence it is observed that the name of *God*, taken absolutely, is often in the Scriptures spoken as of *the Father*; as when we read of *God sending His own Son*; of *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God*.' And he quotes a sentence from a corner in the patristic literature of the eighth century, from Theodorus Abucara (*opusc.* 42) to the effect that 'the Apostles, and the Holy Scriptures almost universally, when they say *God*, thus, absolutely and undistinctively (*ἀπολύτως καὶ*

(ἀπροσδιορίστως), and commonly without the article (ἀνάρθρως), and without special mention of Person, indicate the Father.' I refer to this here that it may not be needful to dwell upon it in each instance.

Our Epistle in its imagined newness lies before us. We ask for its doctrine of the Father; in His Person and operation in general; and then in His relation to the Son, to the Spirit, to the Church, and to the members of the Church.

'The Father' is His brief august designation in iii. 14; for we certainly must remove there from the text the words 'of our Lord Jesus Christ.' 'Father' is given there as almost absolutely His style. No explicit mention is made of the reference of His Paternity, whether to the Eternal Son, or to the Church in Him. Only this latter is not quite out of sight, if we retain (as I for one would do) the A.V. of ver. 15, 'from whom the whole πατριά in heaven and earth gets its name.' But I must not

venture here to discuss the rendering of πᾶσα πατριά, which undoubtedly in classical Greek, but by no means so certainly in that of the N.T., would need to be rendered ‘*every* family,’ or ‘*every* fatherhood.’

In i. 17 He is ‘the Father τῆς δόξης, of the glory.’ Is this merely a Hebraism, so called, for ‘the Father most glorious?’ Or is it not a phrase deeper and richer, as if to indicate that all ‘the glory,’ the manifestation of Godhead, with which as it were He robes and shows Himself, has its source and birth for ever in Himself?

In iii. 9 He is the sole and universal Creator, Θεός ἡ τὰ πάντα κτίσας: that strong foundation truth of the faith, so much more characteristic of *revealed* religion than sometimes we remember it to be. In iv. 18 it is implied that He is not only the God who willed creation into being, but also, in the true idea, the Life of the human creature He has made, the inner and eternal Life; for man in his fall, by his own fault, is now, so we read here, ‘alienated from the life of

God ;' implying that once, in his creation, he was in union with that life.

In ii. 3 we find that the fallen creature is 'child of wrath'; he is as it were marked and characterized by divine displeasure. In v. 6, 'the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience.' So the Father is indeed Personal and Moral; personally and eternally the Adversary of Sin, whether as it infects the nature ($\phi\psi\sigma\epsilon\iota$) or as it develops its infection into action ($\alpha\pi\epsilon i\theta\epsilon\iota\alpha$). As such, He is to be remembered, even by His regenerate human children, with 'fear' (v. 22); the awe which recollects not only His benignity but His holiness; not indeed the terror of the rebel, but the tender reverence which cannot forget the Father's thought of sin.

Sovereign and ultimate is the majesty of this Holy One. 'He worketh all things after the counsel ($\beta\omega\lambda\eta$) of His own will' ($\theta\epsilon\lambda\eta\mu\alpha$; i. 11); 'according to the good pleasure' ($\epsilon\bar{u}\delta\omega\chi\iota\alpha$, almost 'the fiat') 'of His will' (i. 5); 'the good pleasure which He purposed' (i. 9). With this will, infinitely free and

uncaused from without, as it is infinitely good, He, antecedent to the existence of contingent being, πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου (i. 4), words on whose sublime significance human discoveries of the antiquity of Nature throw light always new, ‘selected’ (*ἰξελέξατο*) and ‘defined beforehand’ (*προώρισε*) the Church, the Flock, the Body, that was to be in time. So that to Him, alone and for ever, (we note this great element of truth, perverted into a fallacy only when it is treated as if it were all the truth,) is due the whole praise of the whole salvation of the Body, and of course of every part and member of it. It is ‘given them of the Father’ (John vi. 65).

Infinite Power is in this Will: He is ‘able to do overflowingly above all petition and all thought’ (iii. 20). His power is of exceeding greatness; ‘the working of the strength of His might’ (i. 19).

Meanwhile this awful Sovereignty is in the sure hands of One whose inmost action is Love. ‘God is rich in mercy’ (ii. 4); He loved us ‘with

His great love'; He is bent upon 'showing His kindness' (ii. 7). He is the God 'of grace,' of free favour; He is personally characterized by delight in freely favouring and giving. Such is His 'grace' that it has a 'glory,' a *δόξα* (i. 6), of its own; it has a heavenly 'wealth' (i. 7, ii. 7) of its own. He is the Origin of all good; and on the other hand He is, eternally and rightly, the End of all praise and gratitude from the creature; He is, and ever is to be, 'Blessed,' Εὐλογητός, the Theme of our benedictions (i. 3). 'To Him is to be glory throughout all ages' (iii. 21). 'To our God and Father thanks for all things are to be always given' (v. 20).

We come to ask what He is in His relation to the Saviour. Of Him, in a sense evidently supreme and apart, He is FATHER; 'the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' (i. 3, 17), Who is therefore (iv. 13) *ὁ γιός τοῦ Θεοῦ*. Yea further, He is His 'GOD' (i. 3), *ὁ Θεὸς . τοῦ Κυρίου*: words which, in the light of the whole teaching of the Epistle, leave untouched the necessary and eternal Nature

of the Lord Christ, but are perfectly explained by His Incarnation.

On His Son the Father pours love indeed; Christ is to Him 'the Beloved,' *i.e.* *'Ηγαπημένος* (i. 6). The form of the word, the perfect passive participle, not the verbal *ἀγαπητός*, indicates that on Christ continuously, eternally, up to this moment, the infinite Love settles and abides. Hence the ample joy and safety of those who are 'found in Him'; they are indeed 'in the love of God.'

All the purpose of the Father, all the action of the Father, appears, in this wonderful Letter, as living and moving 'in' the Son. 'In the Son' He 'purposed His good pleasure' (i. 9). In Him He forms 'the purpose (may we use the word 'programme'?) of the ages,' *ἡ πρόθεσις τῶν αἰώνων* (iii. 11); so indissolubly is its cause and its process concerned with Him. (Here is a truth full of awe and of calm when our poor thoughts are lost, as they are so soon, amidst the seeming confusions of time.) His purpose is to

'sum up all things, heavenly and earthly, in Christ as Head' (i. 10). 'In Him' originates and proceeds the whole work of mercy and glory for the regenerate Church. The Father (He is always the ultimate Agent) chooses His saints in Him (i. 4), and 'creates them' in Him (ii. 10) for a life of holiness, and 'gives them grace' in Him (i. 6), and 'forgives them in Him' (iv. 32; note the Greek), and raises them from the death of wrath and sin in Him (ii. 1, 5), and seats them in Him in heavenly exaltation (ii. 6), and has blessed them in Him with all spiritual benediction (i. 3), and builds them stone by stone into His own eternal abode in Him (ii. 29). And when we look into the prospect of the coming bliss, in its long and circling 'ages,' we see 'glory' brought to the Everlasting Father not only in the Church but 'in Christ Jesus' (note the Greek, iii. 21). For ever will the Father be praised, as He is seen revealed, not only in our salvation taken in itself, but in what His Son, incarnate, sacrificed,

glorified, united to His Bride, is seen in the eternal Light to be.

The whole Epistle, from this point of view, is a development of that wonderful utterance at its opening, ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ’; that benediction so dear to the Apostles, used by St Paul here and in 2 Cor. i. 3, and by St Peter in the same place in his First Epistle,* ‘The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ’; let us continually call Him so with all our thought, and from all our heart. Here is the Supreme Being, but more; the First Cause, but more; the Creator, but more; the eternal Moral Governor, but more. Seen in His Son, He is Love, personal and paternal Love. We find here the Ultimate of Existence, its everlasting Cause and Law; and it is not It, a *Bùθος*, ‘an Abyss,’ as in the Gnostic’s dream; it is HE, He to Whom the

* The Epistle whose many likenesses to this of St Paul’s (both, by the way, addressed to Christians of Asia Minor) have been remarked.

SON looked up, and said, ‘Holy FATHER, I have glorified Thee; I come to Thee; Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.’ ‘God absolute,’ says Martin Luther, in a noble and characteristic passage (on Ps. li. 1), ‘all men must fly from who do not wish to perish, for human nature and God absolute are deadly foes; by such majesty our nature must be overwhelmed. Let us speak with God robed and clothed in His word and promises, and including Christ in His name. This God we can embrace, and can behold with joy and trust. God absolute is as a brazen wall, on which we cannot run without our own destruction.’* ‘God is love.’ We know it—for He is eternally the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Father appears in the Epistle in revealed

* It has been objected by a friendly critic of these studies that Luther’s words seem to suggest that ‘God Absolute’ and ‘human nature’ are in all respects ‘foes.’ But surely the thought of Luther, than whom no man ever more fully believed that God is Love, is concerned here with the practical relations between man viewed simply as a sinner, and God considered apart from His own provision of redeeming grace in His Son.

relation also to the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is ‘of God’ (iv. 30), τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἕγιον τοῦ Θεοῦ, ‘His’ in eternal Origin and Union. In the great passage of spiritual experience at the close of ch. iii. the Apostle (ver. 14) ‘bows His knees to the Father, that the saints may be strengthened in the inner man by His Spirit;’ as ever, the Father is the ultimate Cause of blessing, while the Spirit is the immediate agent in the soul. Again, in i. 17, in the prayer that a deeper illumination may be granted to the Ephesians, it is ‘the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory,’ whom he approaches with the request that πνεῦμα σοφίας καὶ ἀποκαλύψεως, ‘the Spirit of wisdom and revelation,’ may come as His gift from heaven, to lift the veil from the full sight of the treasures of faith and to effect a new spiritual sight of HIM.* Again, the Spirit (i. 13) is ‘the Holy Spirit of promise,’ words evidently bearing the same reference as the Lord’s own (Luke xxiv.

* I render here, notwithstanding the absence of the article, ‘*The* Spirit of wisdom, etc.’; but of this more will be said later.

49), 'I send the promise *of my Father* upon you.' It is to the Father that we have access (ii. 18) 'in the one Spirit.' It is for the Father's eternal inhabitation that the mystical temple is preparing 'in the Spirit' (ii. 22). It is the Father who, 'in the Spirit,' has revealed to His Apostles and Prophets (iii. 5) the glorious catholicity of the true Church, the equal part and lot in His Son, through faith, of Gentiles with Israel; one Body, one Spirit. It is the Father, manifestly, who 'seals' the believers with His Holy Spirit (i. 13; iv. 30). Lastly, 'the sword of the Spirit,' *ἡ μάχαιρα τοῦ Πνεύματος* (vi. 17), is 'the Word *of God*', the revelation of the Father's truth and love in the Scriptures, in the Gospel.

V I

The account in the Epistle of the Father's relation to the Church—Examinations in detail of ii. 8, 9—His Glory manifested through the Church—Children of God—Temple of God—The doctrine of the Epistle about the Holy Spirit
—*Veni Creator.*

IT remains to collect and review what the Epistle says of the Father as He is seen in His relation to the Church, to the mystical Body and Members of the Son. Much of this class of truths has been already before us, but from other points of view.

As for us then, who by grace are in the Son of God, we read here as follows about the whole 'blessed Company' and all its true members. In the Father (iii. 9) was 'hid away from all eternity the dispensation of the mystery' of our redemption; its *oīxovouia* (so read), its

management and distribution through the work of the Son, lay as a purpose, as a destiny, deep in the will of the Father, above all time, to be manifested in the fulness of times. It is the Father who designs and destines the salvation of the Church in Christ, with all its everlasting and ever-growing issues. He chooses us out (i. 4); He marks us out beforehand (i. 5); and He does so, we observe, not only that we may be somehow rescued from wrath into peace, but 'that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love'; that we should be 'adopted as children' to Himself. It is He Who, in pre-temporal purpose, 'spoke ($\varepsilon\nu\lambda\omega\gamma\eta\sigma\alpha\varsigma$) all spiritual benediction upon us in Christ' (i. 3), assigning as it were articulately to us the right and title to all His grace, by the Spirit, in virtue of our union with His Son. It is He Who (i. 18, ch. iv. 1) 'calls' us ($\dot{\eta} \dot{\varepsilon}\lambda\pi\iota\varsigma \tau\tilde{\eta}\varsigma \chi\lambda\eta\sigma\epsilon\omega\varsigma \alpha\dot{u}\tau\tilde{o}\tilde{u}$); that is to say, following the unvarying use of $\chi\alpha\lambda\epsilon\tilde{n}$ and its cognates in the Epistles, in spiritual references, it is He Who

not only invites us but actually and prevailingly brings us in. (See, for a specimen of the proof of this, 1 Cor. i. 23-29.) It is He Who (ii. 5, etc.) ‘has saved us’ (*σεσωσμένοι ἐστέ*) ‘by grace, through faith, not in consideration of works,’ *χάριτι, διὰ τῆς πίστεως, οὐκ εἰς ἔργων.* It is all the Father’s gift; *Θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον.*

Let us pause a few moments upon these well-known words, ii. 8, 9, for a short study of their phraseology and inner connexion. *Tῇ γὰρ χάριτὶ ἐστε σεσωσμένοι, διὰ πίστεως (καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ εἰς ὑμῶν Θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον) οὐκ εἰς ἔργων, ἵνα μή τις καυχήσηται.* I read these clauses at full length, and in the Greek, on purpose. It is a question, as my reader well knows, whether the Apostle here does or does not assert faith to be the gift of God. It is maintained by many expounders that he cannot mean to assert it, for the Greek grammar is against it; he writes *διὰ πίστεως, καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ εἰς ὑμῶν, κ.τ.λ.,* not *διὰ πίστεως, καὶ αὐτη, κ.τ.λ..;* so that, grammatically ‘*faith*’ and ‘*that*’ are out of direct mutual connexion; and so *καὶ τοῦτο* and

$\tau\delta\ \delta\tilde{\omega}\rho\nu$ must be referred to the previous statement of the gratuity of our salvation, not to the detail of a supposed 'gift' of our *faith*. But I maintain nevertheless that there is a reference of $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \tau\tilde{o}\nu\tau\o$ —not indeed grammatically to the noun $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$, but—practically to the thought and fact that we have believed.

What is the habitual function of the phrase 'and that,' $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \tau\tilde{o}\nu\tau\o$? It is to give a new point, a new factor, to the thought in hand; to enhance what has gone before. So 1 Cor. vi. 6, 8; 'Brother goeth to law with brother, $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \tau\tilde{o}\nu\tau\o$ before the unbelievers'; 'Ye do wrong and defraud, $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \tau\tilde{o}\nu\tau\o$ your brethren.' $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \tau\tilde{o}\nu\tau\o$ is nothing if not a note of new and distinctive fact. Now what does the $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \tau\tilde{o}\nu\tau\o$ here touch naturally with its proper point? Not the whole context, not the general idea. For that, as a whole, *needs* no such addition. It has already stated the gratuitousness of our salvation in general in terms of overwhelming strength. But let $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \tau\tilde{o}\nu\tau\o$ point its emphasis just at the last

detail in the statement, just at the idea given by ‘through your faith,’ διὰ τῆς πίστεως, and we see at once the truest pertinence. For exactly *there* the reader would need reminding that what seemed to be (and in a sense really was) *his own* part in the matter—his faith, his believing, his taking God at His word—is yet, ultimately, ‘not his own, but given.’ True, it is his act, personal and genuine, and so it will be to the last. But that he acts thus is God’s gift. For it is God Who has brought him to such a sight of his sin and of his Lord that by a deep necessity, a necessity not mechanical but moral, he *must* believe, he *must* commit himself to Jesus Christ: ‘to whom else should he go?’

This is a considerable digression on a single point. But it bears all the while upon our main present theme, the work and grace of the Father in our salvation. ‘Of Him’ indeed ‘are all things’; ‘of Him are we in Christ Jesus’ (I Cor. i. 30). He (ii. 4-10), ‘wealthy in pity, on account

of His great love with which He loved us, being, as we were, dead men in our trespasses, *He* woke us to life, in union with Christ (by grace you stand saved, *σεσωσμένοι*); and raised us from the grave in that union; and in that union seated us in the heavenly world in Christ Jesus; that He might demonstrate, in the ages that are coming on, the overwhelming wealth of His grace in kindness poured upon us in Christ Jesus. For by His (*τῆς*) grace you stand saved, through your (*τῆς*) faith (aye, and *that* part of the matter is not *of you*; *God's* is the gift); not of works' (a phrase on which the Roman Epistle throws ample light; it means to exclude human merit, root and branch, to negative everything that can intrude between the trusting penitent and the perfect Christ), 'that no one might boast. For His making (*ποιημα*) are we, created in Christ Jesus,' a creation coincident in idea with our regeneration and union, 'with a view to good works, which God,' which the Father, 'prepared beforehand, that in them we might walk.'

What does this wonderful paragraph not contain? Here is the work of the sacrificed and risen Christ, and the provision of it for us by the free favour of the Father. Here is our part and lot in it, sure and present, through faith; and the origin of both provision and possession lies in the Father's grace. Here is the path of holiness prepared by the Father, in which the redeemed walk, not to attain but to fulfil their spiritual rest in God. And here are the eternal issues, in their unknown and wonderful developments, when 'the ages that are coming on,' whatever ranks and worlds of spectators shall occupy them, will see, in the Church of 'the saved ones by grace, through faith,' the supreme manifestation of the glory of the Father's 'kindness.'

This last thought recurs again and again, the thought of the ulterior issues of our salvation, as the Father uses the Church of His dear Son as the chosen channel for the manifestation of Himself in His universe. So i. 12; we are to

be 'to the praise of the glory of His grace.' In iii. 21, 'glory' is to come to Him, the Father, 'in the Church,' 'unto all the generations of the age of ages'; a sentence in which language seems to labour under a weight of futurity too great for it to bear; a sentence in which there lie hid we know not what issues for life and blessing, through the Church, for the universe. And already, not only in an illimitable coming time but now, we, if indeed we are in Christ, are being used to the Father's praise. For see iii. 10, with its connexion, and its wonderful intimation. The Apostle is rejoicing in the thought of his mission, as he is used in the hand of God 'to preach among the nations the unsearchable wealth of Christ,' and to 'illuminate' (ver. 11.) the fact and nature of the secret of redemption which was 'hid in God' so long. And what does he say about the aim and outcome of the work? Not now that it will elevate humanity, or that it will console the sorrows and heal the sins of earth; but 'that

now to the principalities and to the powers in the heavenly world might be made clear through the Church the multifold wisdom of God.' So then, at this hour, the believing company, the Lord's true Body, is being observed from the unseen. And that observation is not the compassionate curiosity which the poet assigns to angels as they watch the workings of the human mind :—

‘Superior beings, when of late they saw
A mortal man unfold all nature’s law,
Admired such wisdom in an earthly shape,
And show’d a Newton as we show an ape !’ *

No ; that is not the Scripture doctrine of man. In Scripture, with unbroken consistency, man, while laid in the dust before God as creature, and most of all as sinner, is viewed with awe and with congratulation as regards his place and function in creation. And here, somehow, so it is indicated, the grace, the power, the life of God in the Church of redeemed men is said to be the deep

* *Essay on Man*, ii. 31.

study of angelic intelligences, who see there *the sphere* in which to trace, not the abnormal achievements of the creature, but the manifold wisdom of the Father, calling life out of death, glory out of the Fall, making His power perfect in weakness, uniting man to Himself in Christ.

Men thus redeemed, in their community in Christ, are now (ii. 19) inmates of the home of the Father, His *oikētōi*, His *necessarii*, 'members of His family.' They are in truth and fact His children; by adoption, *vioθεσία* (i. 5), and by new nature, *τεκνά* (v. 1), 'children born.' We note that here, as almost everywhere in Scripture, the terms of Fatherhood and Childhood are used of the relationship not of Creation but of Redemption, not of nature but of grace. Great and wonderful is the relationship in nature between the Maker and the being made of old in His image. But very rarely at the most, so it seems to me, does the language of birth, and Fatherhood, and family, attach to that relationship in

either the Old Testament or the New. It is reserved for man *in Christ*.

In grace, in Christ, as vivified and raised in Him, we are indeed, as to the Father, 'children,' 'dear children,' *vioi Θεοῦ, τεκνά Θεοῦ, ἀγαπητὰ τεκνά*. So to Him as to our very Father, in a sense of that word as intense as it is definite, we have 'introduction' (*προσαγωγή* ii. 18, iii. 12). He welcomes our inmost approaches, behind all scenes of outward life. He meets us and listens to us, not only as a Sovereign on some day of state receives his peers, and perhaps his children among them, to an intercourse elaborate, limited, reserved because of its very pomp; but rather as that same Sovereign in the recesses of home life and love clasps his children to his heart, and hears all they have to say, and gives them an affection no longer hampered in its exercise but quickened in its pulse and joy by the fact of his royalty and theirs.*

* I owe the suggestion of this sentence to a noble passage in Miss Alcock's *Spanish Brothers*, ch. ix.

Meanwhile from another side, and in view now mainly of the eternal future, this Church in the Son of God, these men chosen, called, saved, raised, seated in the heavenly regions, children of God entering with absolute confidence into their Father's inmost presence, are viewed as the Father's 'temple.' See ii. 21, 22. There the picture is of a vast unfinished rising structure, furnished indeed already with foundation and with corner-stone, but growing still; not completed, not inaugurated yet. 'All the building' (so, in the light of the whole context and imagery, I would render πᾶσα οἰκοδομή) 'is growing into a holy shrine (ναός) in the Lord; ye are getting built together' (with all other saints) 'for God's permanent abode, in the Spirit.' Such is the wonderful destiny of the believing company. It is to become at length perfectly, and as it were in public consecration, what it has only in part as yet begun to be. In its heavenly perfectness it is to be the scene of the unremoving Presence of the Father in His final manifestation, the

vehicle for the showing of His glory to whatever witnesses Eternity shall bring to see it.

Meantime, in these years and ages of preparation, it is the Father, in the Son, Who comes already, as faith receives Him, to fill the narrow house of the disciple's 'heart' (iii. 19). The man (so prays the Apostle) is to know the love of Christ, in order that he may be 'filled unto all the fulness of God'; up to the limit, if we may speak of limit here, of the Father's communicability, in His grace and power, to the believing man.

'Lord, we ask it, hardly knowing
What this wondrous gift may be;
Yet fulfil to overflowing;
Thy great meaning let us see.'

ii. We have thus reviewed the witness of our new-discovered Epistle to the glory of the Father. In a briefer way of exposition let us now examine its oracles on the power and working of the Holy Spirit.

The passages where the Spirit is named we

find not to be many. Yet they are not few, and they are of the most sacred weight. And we note the remarkable emphasis given here to this side of truth, in contrast to the equally remarkable silence upon it in the Epistle to the Colossians; a silence which I do not attempt to explain, for in any case this is not the occasion.*

Before collecting the passages here, we observe that in only some of them the article goes with $\Pi\nu\varepsilon\tilde{\nu}\mu\alpha$ (see i. 13, iii. 6, iv. 30, v. 17). I hardly need remind the reader that it is often maintained that $\Pi\nu\varepsilon\tilde{\nu}\mu\alpha$ with the article denotes the Spirit as personal, and that $\Pi\nu\varepsilon\tilde{\nu}\mu\alpha$ without it denotes Spirit in a sense more vague and impersonal; spiritual influence, or the effect of it. For myself I cannot find any satisfactory law in the matter. And for our purpose now it seems sufficient, looking at the New Testament as a whole, to say that the word $\Pi\nu\varepsilon\tilde{\nu}\mu\alpha$, as we shall find it here, denotes *at least* the personal opera-

* It is as noteworthy in Colossians as is the absence of all mention of the Lord's glorious Return in Ephesians.

tion, if not the Person. The distinction, therefore, need not be pressed in translation and in practical exposition here.

The Epistle then gives us the following as its doctrine of the Spirit.

The Spirit is *personal*, if words are to be understood in their natural meaning; see that appeal to the Christian's heart, iv. 30: 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.' We have here in the Spirit, manifestly, not 'It' but 'Him'; One able personally, however mysteriously, to be 'wounded' by the Christian's sin.

No explicit mention occurs of the Spirit's work in our regeneration. As we have seen, the Father is here presented in His life-giving action, without mention of His divine Co-agent. But the mention of the Spirit in iv. 3, 4, as the One Spirit of the One Body—the body of those risen with Christ and seated with Him in His exaltation, the body in fact of the true Church—at least suggests His action in the beginning as in the maintenance of the life of the members. The Epistle

rather dwells however on His operation in them when they are already alive by grace in Christ. He (i. 13, iv. 30) is the divine Seal upon their union with their Lord; *πιστεύσαντες ἐσφραγίσθητε.* ‘on believing you were sealed,’ ‘sealed unto the day of redemption.’ Perhaps he refers here to the *χαρίσματα*, the tongues and prophecies; but it is at least noticeable that in this group of Epistles, the Epistles of the first Roman imprisonment, there is (putting this passage aside) no explicit reference to those mysteries. In any event I cannot think that he refers to them alone, but also, if not only, to the far profounder and more wonderful gift of the new conscious life of the Spirit in the believer, evidenced by its holy fruits, love, joy, peace, and all that radiant circle (Gal. v. 21, 22).* ‘In the Spirit,’ animated and enabled by Him, the Christian ‘has his (*τὴν*) access to the Father’ (ii. 18). The presence of the Spirit in him is

* We must not quote v. 9 in this connexion; for there certainly we read *φωτὸς*, not *πνεῦματος*.

the earnest of his heavenly inheritance (i. 14), ‘the bud of heaven,’ ‘glory begun below.’ Yet though already thus possessed of the Spirit, the man may, yea does, need Him as it were to come again, in new developments of His power. In i. 17 the Apostle’s prayer is for the gift, by the Father, of ‘the Spirit of wisdom and unveiling in the true knowledge of God’; as if they still had all to learn about the greatness of their blessings. In iii. 16 he beseeches the gift of the same blessed Agent, to strengthen the saints ‘deep in the (*εἰς τὸν*) inner man,’ enabling them to a surrender of faith which should bring Christ in a new and wonderful measure to ‘re-side,’ to be at home, in their hearts. In v. 18 he lays it upon them not as an ambition, but (let us note it well) as a precept of Christian duty, to ‘be filled in the Spirit,’ *πληροῦσθαι ἐν Πνεύματι*. This filling was to be ‘*in* Him,’ for already He was ‘about’ them, in His blessed potency; but they might yet need, in faith and surrender, to welcome His full power and presence into all

their being and all their life. The weapon of their soul's victory was to be 'the sword of the Spirit' (vi. 17), the Word inspired, and to be applied, by Him. And their prayer (vi. 18) was to be 'always with all supplication in the Spirit,' as they gave themselves to Him to form their wills and to uphold their trust. Their songs of praise were to be 'spiritual,' *πνευματικὰ* (v. 19), prompted and vivified by Him.

In the sphere of the Church at large, the Father 'through the Spirit' has revealed (iii. 5) His plan of universal blessing to His Apostles and Prophets. And the One Spirit and the One Body (iv. 4) are correlatives in the life of the true organism, whose oneness is supremely a oneness of the Spirit. And it is the 'Spirit' 'in' which it grows (ii. 22) to its eternal completion as the habitation of the Father.

I close without one word of summing up, only with a humble prayer, quickened in the heart by this review. May we, in the Ephesus of our day, experience always in holy reality

the counterpart of this Ephesian theology of
the Spirit !

*Veni, Creator Spiritus,
Mentes tuorum visita;
Imple supernâ gratiâ
Quæ Tu creasti pectora. Amen.*

VII

The Epistle examined for its account of the Christian—Not the unusual but the normal Christian—His privileges and inner experience—Eternal provision made for him—He ‘begins fallen’—His recovery and blessings in Christ—Session in the heavenly places—All is mercy—His salvation complete from one view-point, progressive from another—These truths are facts for us in our day.

WE open once more our Epistle, to study it as a new-found treasure. We take up this authentic relic of the earliest, the apostolic age, this true product of the pen and of the soul of the man who indeed ‘heard the words of God and saw the vision of the Almighty’; and we again interrogate it, with the curiosity of a new research, following one definite line of its contents. That line now is, its picture of the primitive Christian.

When, a few years ago, under circumstances of great interest and almost of romance, the *Apology of Aristides* was recovered from its long oblivion,* with what keen and eager scrutiny did its readers turn, amidst its many treasures of information about second-century conditions, to Aristides' panegyric upon the life of Christians as he saw it then! Every sentence was marked; every side of the simple but radiant picture was scrutinized — the practical beneficence, the scrupulous honesty, the forgiveness, the sympathy, the brotherly considerateness of the master for the slave, the self-sacrificing care for the poor and for the stranger, the blessed thankfulness and happiness of spirit, the holy modesty and dignity of woman, the habitual prayerfulness, the joyful thoughts of the peace and bliss of the beloved ones gone to the Lord, so that funerals were almost transfigured into triumphs of light and song.

* See, for an excellent popular account, Mrs Rendel Harris's little volume, *The Apology of Aristides*.

That was indeed a lovely picture, calling for thankful, and for humiliated, study. But it was only the stream of which this Ephesian portrait gives us, as it were, the fountain. Here the reporter is not the philosophic observer of a second or third generation, but the apostolic friend and educator of the first, and we have his very words before us. We will gladly make such slight effort of imagination as may awaken anew our curiosity for what he has to say of the Christian life as it could be lived, and as assuredly it was lived, in Asian circles in the year 63, to the glory of the grace of God.

The Epistle shall be asked then to yield us—as if for the first time—its *portrait of the New Testament Christian*. We will remember as we do so, on the threshold, that it is the portrait not of an unusual Christian but of the Christian. Throughout the Epistle there is not a hint of any abnormal circumstances attached to any of the lives in question. When first it was read in the assemblies, no one

would hear one word about life or duty which, as to practical precepts, travelled further or higher than the common day of the ordinary man or woman. No distinction, no *éclat*, is indicated, even in the way of suffering. No solemn words occur, as in some other epistolary passages, *e.g.*, in Romans viii., in Philippians i., in 2 Timothy, in 1 Peter, about the sorrows and the glories of confessorship or martyrdom. The Ephesian Letter aims its counsels and revelations, in a very remarkable degree, only at life lived under average conditions. The more immediately interesting it is therefore to us under our present circumstances, and the more keenly searching, when it draws in front of that prosaic background the picture of a life so holy, so harmless and undefiled, and having meanwhile its source and secret higher than the heavens.

One of the great and most necessary aims of the pastoral teacher in the English parish is to persuade men and women to believe, by

the grace of God, that not a select few here and there but all who name the name of Christ as Saviour and Master are called—not to respectability but to holiness; to a life in the whole of which the Lord Christ is secret power and outward rule. The intended normal Christian life is that in which Christ governs, from the centre, the whole circumference; in which the honest aim is a total abstinence from known sinning and a positive doing of all God's known will; in which religion, that is to say, the Lord Jesus Christ, is indeed 'kept in its place' and therefore 'in all places, and at all times.' In pressing that great fact of the Gospel upon the people let us always reanimate ourselves by fresh researches into the Word of God alike for the rule and practice of the life of holiness and (let us not forget) for its spiritual secret. Such researches we are attempting now.

The Epistle puts before us the Christian under two main aspects. First we have the hidden 'pulse of the machine,' the springs of

grace, the heavenly secret behind the veil, the possessions and experience of the true member of the Lord's true body. This is given us in chapters i.-iii., with a few gatherings from the remaining pages. Then we have the resulting walk and work, the character, the conduct; the use of time, of tongue, of means, the discharge of duty in the relationships of life. This is given us in chapters iv.-vi. I propose to examine the two parts of the picture separately, while remembering of course their vital relation. We might with equal advantage, perhaps, approach them in either order; studying the conduct first and the secret last, or the secret first and the conduct last. But the latter is the order of the Epistle.

i. The Secrets and Experience of the New Testament Christian's life.

Here one word must be said about my treatment of the matter *individual-wise*, so as to look at the New Testament

Christian rather than at the New Testament Church. I fully remember the grandeur and the importance of the presentation in the Epistle, above all in its first chapters, of the *Ecclesia*.* Wonderful is the depth and power of the truth, set forth more fully here than anywhere else in the Scripture, of the divinely-ordered 'solidarity' of all the true members in the glorious Head. And in the picture of the individual, as we study it, we shall feel that a light from above and from around is shed upon the whole portrait by the presence and remembrance of that other truth, the truth of the Church. The man we shall consider, while whole and genuine in himself as an individual, is whole and genuine *as a member* only as he recollects, and seeks to act upon, his connexion through the Head with all who also are in Him. The multitude of the faithful are not a heap of crystals but limbs of a body in the Lord. Yet for our present pur-

* See above, page 56.

pose, and certainly I think for the purposes of our pastoral teaching, while the ‘solidarity’ of the living Church is the truth which, so to speak, harmonizes the total of the picture, the individual aspect of the matter is the likelier to come quite home to conscience and to faith in practical application. And of the lawfulness of such an inference, from truths of the Church to truths of the soul, I am sure, with Scripture before me. Is Christ the Head of the Church? He is also (1 Cor. xi. 3) ‘the Head of every man,’ *κεφαλὴ παντὸς ἀνθρώπου*. Is He the Bridegroom of the Church? He is also so related to the individual believer that the individual is described as ‘joined unto the Lord,’ *κολλώμενος τῷ Κυρίῳ* (1 Cor. vi. 17), in a context full of the thought of bridal union. Did Christ love the Church and give Himself for it? He also, so says the believing man, ‘loved me and gave Himself for me’ (Gal. ii. 20).

What then, in this wonderful document, are the secrets of the state and life of the true

member of the true Church of God? ‘In Christ,’ his Head, he looks back so far as to ‘before the foundation of the world,’ and he is told that he was then ‘blessed with all spiritual benediction in Him’ (i. 3). ‘In Him’ he was ‘chosen out to be holy and blameless in the love’ of God (i. 4); ordained beforehand to the wonderful position of His adopted son (i. 5); ‘accepted* in the Beloved One (i. 6).’ Descending from Eternity into the Time which it overshadows, we find the man beginning his individual life under conditions which little portend the realization of the heavenly and archetypal Will. *How* it is not here explained, (we must go to other Scriptures, and particularly to other Pauline Scriptures, for the *how*,) but somehow so it was (and the experience of humanity affirms the truth only too well) that he was ‘dead in his trespasses and his sins’ (ii. 1): he was ‘darkness’ (v. 8); he was under the mysterious power not only of ab-

* So I would still render there, having regard to the connexion of the word *έχαπλωσεν*.

stract evil but of malign antagonists of God, headed by the rebel prince of sin, ‘the ruler of the authority of the air, ruler of the Spirit-force (*τοῦ πνεύματος*: so I would explain) now working in the sons of disobedience’ (ii. 2). (I attempt no exegesis in detail of this dark passage, only saying that ‘the air,’ so far as I can see, is used here in a sense which hovers between the mystical and the literal. Viewless yet palpable, ‘the air’ is, if not the element, at least the reminding symbol, of the surrounding agents of evil in their subtle yet operative presence). Yes, the man was ‘walking according to that authority,’ just so far as he was not the loyal subject of God. Whether he was profligate or humanly virtuous, this was alike the case with him. Profligacy and human virtue are unutterably different in other respects; but in this respect they make no difference; the man might live in either camp and yet not love God. And if so, he went, in that deep respect, the way not of God, but of God’s adversary. So says St

Paul in this very place, by implication, about himself; '*We all* had *our* life-course in the past in the lusts of the flesh,' i.e., in the biases and likings of the self-life, 'fulfilling the lusts of the flesh and of the mind; and *we* were by nature' as distinguished from grace, 'children of wrath;' involved in just such divine displeasure as must attach to the being who is morally discordant with God.

Thus did the biography of the New Testament Christian begin, whether he had been Trophimus the heathen or Saul the Hebrew of Hebrews. And no resources of his own could strike life out of death, holiness out of spiritual discord. He was 'apart from Christ' (ii. 12), 'without God,' 'without hope.' But then came the mighty 'grace,' the uncaused active favour, from the 'God who is rich in mercy.' Christ, following out the 'eternal purpose,' had died, had risen, had gone to the throne (ii. 5), Man for men; on purpose that those who should join themselves to Him should be as if

they had died, had risen, had gone to the throne, to the very side, to the very heart, of the Father. And the New Testament Christian, thanks to the gift of God (ii. 8), had ‘believed through grace’ (Acts xxviii. 27), and so on his part had received his union with his Head. So in Christ, with Christ, he had been ‘brought to life’ (ii. 5), and with Him had—*passed into the heavens*. Astonishing thought! Συνεκάθισεν ἡμᾶς ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ἐν Χριστῷ. Let us not forget that side of the truth of our salvation. It is a side sometimes exaggerated, but very much more often forgotten. Sacred and precious is the truth that the Lord is with His people here, everywhere, always; blessed be His name. But do not let us forget the mighty antecedent truth that we, believing, are with Him there, in an unspeakable union, in living membership, in divine acceptance, through Him and in Him Who is our Head in the life of the Spirit, and Who is now not *standing before* the Throne, but *seated*, after His sacrifice once offered, *upon* it.

Looking altogether to Him let us embrace this wonderful fact of the New Testament Christian's inmost life and power—his session with Christ above, as faith, that is to say Christ trusted, makes Christ's exaltation ours.

So the Ephesian Christian 'has' indeed (i. 7) 'redemption, even the forgiveness of his sins,' in this exalted Christ. And he remembers, amidst all his possession of this place of peace and glory, how it was won for him; 'in His blood' (i. 7), 'in the blood of Christ' (ii. 13), 'by the Cross' (ii. 16). So he was 'made nigh,' 'reconciled,' pardoned. The exaltation of his acceptance never obscures for him the remembrance of the forgiveness which was its first vital step, and which humbles him in his own eyes for ever. He cannot lose sight ever of the death of unknown sinbearing through which His Lord passed for him to the throne. Nor does he forget the call, the *κλῆσις*, the compassionate and most tender *fiat*, which brought him in fact into union with his Lord

(i. 8, iv. 1). Always, in his most illuminated assurance of his lot in Christ, (and he is meant indeed to know, to be assured; i. 18, iii. 18, 19,) he remembers the wonderful *mercy* of the whole, the atoning blood, the will-transforming grace.

So the New Testament Christian is now alive, and privileged and incorporated, His 'Head' is Christ, in the sense, as we have seen, not only of being his Chief and King, but also of being the living Source of his new life, the Secret of his strength and growth. The reality of this wonderful union, which is the bright and harmonizing centre of all the truths of grace, is 'sealed' for the New Testament Christian by 'the Holy Spirit of promise' (i. 13, iv. 30), Who now, as received by faith (see Gal. iii. 14), dwells in mysterious speciality within him, and, whether by effects of abnormal wonder or no, whether by tongues and signs or wholly by the fruit of divine love, peace, and strength, proves that the man's union with Christ is 'a sober certainty of waking bliss.'

Nor is the ‘Seal’ given only for his comfort, but also for his wakening and his warning. For the ‘Seal’ denotes property ; it marks him (i. 11, 14) as a piece of the Lord’s inheritance, the Lord’s ‘purchased possession,’ absolutely belonging to Him now, and ‘in the day of redemption’ (iv. 30) to be fully and actually appropriated by Him for endless uses. Yes, he is nothing now if not the dedicated property of Him Who has so much blessed him. He is *ἄγιος*, consecrated (i. 1). He is ‘Chrst’s bond servant,’ *δοῦλος* (v. 6, 8). He exists, in his redeemed, and forgiven, and Spirit-gifted life, ‘to the praise of God’s glory’ (i. 12). He is a limb in the Body which is made for its Head. He is a stone in the Temple (ii. 22) which is built for its Indweller. For this supreme end, for this life in Christ lived ‘not unto himself,’ he is endowed with a power not his own ; ‘the exceeding greatness of God’s power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of the strength of His might, which he exerted in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead’

(i. 19, 20). So he is to be, so in faith he can indeed be, ‘strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might’ (vi. 10). That exhortation is no rhetorical appeal; it is a call to use a secret given. For his deliverance from evil and his power for good, in Christ, is *a fact*; only it is a fact waiting to be used. *He has*, in Christ (so I would interpret iv. 22-24), ‘put off the old man,’ the old state and union, as he was condemned and helpless, and ‘put on the new,’ as he is accepted and forgiven in Christ the Second Man. But he must use what he has, he must be what he is.

So circumstanced, and with such aims, the Christian of our Epistle is indeed *to grow*, not only in character and conduct but—behind it, and in order to it—in spiritual experience. From one great view-point, as we have seen, he is with humble assurance to think himself, in Christ, complete; complete in his acceptance, his membership, his union, his endowment in the Lord, his appropriation by the Lord. In these respects he is *σεσωμένος*, completely

saved (ii. 8). But then, as regards the insight into his treasures and the use of his endowment, he is to grow always; and in particular he is to seek, and covet, and expect definite ascents and growths of holy experience as the Spirit of God works in him. See the two great prayers of the Apostle, i. 15, etc.; iii. 14, etc. In the first it is asked for him that, 'holy and believing' as he is already, accepted and richly blest as he is, the Spirit may so deal with him that he may be, in view of his possessed but as yet unrealized treasures, like a blind man brought to see; 'The eyes of your heart' (so read) 'being illuminated, that you may know' (as if ignorant now) 'what is the hope of His calling,' the brightness of the eternal prospect opened by the 'call' which has brought you to Him, 'and what the wealth of the glory of His inheritance amongst His saints, and what' the grandeur of that loving power which raised and exalted your Lord for you. In the latter prayer (iii. 14, etc.) the request is that the Spirit of the Father would

so strengthen the Christian, ‘deep in the inner man’ (*εἰς τὸν ἔσω ἀνθρώπον*) that into his heart, the heart of the man already gifted in Christ as richly as we have seen, Christ may yet come—as if for the first time—to dwell; *κατοικῆσαι*, ‘come into permanent abode.’ It asks that the man may so use his ‘root and foundation in love,’ in the love of God, ‘that he may get strong enough to grasp’ the dimensions of the plan of grace, ‘and to know the thought-surpassing love of Christ,’ and so may receive fully into his ‘frail vessel’ the *πλήρωμα*, the ‘fulness,’ of God; all that which, being attribute in Him, can be grace in us. And let us not forget that other precept for perpetual growth in the Christian’s experience and spiritual condition (we touched upon it in a previous reading), the *πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι* of v. 18. Spiritual man as he is, he must yet always seek and receive, as a thing not of course indeed but of faith, the fulness of the Spirit, the presence and power of the Holy Ghost in all regions of his being.

So, in the Apostle's description, and in his precepts and his prayers, the New Testament Christian stands out in the primal glory of his riches and his possibilities in Christ. And what have eighteen hundred and thirty years to do with the eternal facts and principles which have been thus unrolled before us? Is their light and power less now than then? No; for they are the gifts of Him with whom a thousand years are as a watch in the night. The heavenly calling, the power of grace, the peace of the atoning Cross, the emancipation of the soul in Christ, the perfect freedom of the limb in true union with its Head, the fulness of the Spirit, the indwelling of the Lord — these are things which, like their Source, know no变ability nor shadow of turning. Innumerable hearts at this hour are proving that so it is.

VIII

The account in the Epistle of the Christian's life—The law of holiness—Holiness the 'final cause' of faith—The Christian is before all things humble—Why this must be so—Yet not without will and tone—Truthful—Pure—Watchful—Serviceable—'A Puritan life'—The Christian home—Slavery—Lessons from the policy of the Gospel towards slavery—The conflict of the Christian with evil powers—Conclusion—Renan's estimate of St Paul—The believer's estimate of him.

ii. BUT now we turn the page, and pass to the second limb of the precious document before us. Here is the sequel, the inference, the issue of these revelations of spiritual fact, and of these wonderful possibilities of experience. Here upon privilege follows conduct. What is the account of the conduct of the New Testament Christian to be?

We note well one point as we proceed; the order of the subjects, with its lesson. We are about to study Christian fruit. We are reminded, by its place in the writer's thought, of the impossibility of this without Christian root. Scripture is guiltless of what someone has called 'that cheerless Gospel, *you ought to be good*' Presenting to us God in Christ, received into the very man by faith to be his life and power, his pledged and covenanted secret and equipment, it says to him, then and therefore, 'You ought to be holy, *because of Him*; you are made, you are re-made, to be holy, *by Him*; you exist as a redeemed and regenerated man on purpose to be holy, *in Him and for Him*.' 'Brethren, we are debtors' to the Spirit (Rom. viii. 12). And there is means to pay. For we have the Spirit of Christ; if we 'are Christ's,' if we are not 'none of His' (Rom. viii. 9).

We note one fact further; the magnificent prominence and urgency given in these pages to

our call to personal and practical holiness, as the true goal and issue of all true salvation. In the luminous statement on Good Works in our Twelfth Article, true sequel to the powerful affirmation of our Justification in the Eleventh, I have always felt nevertheless a certain sense of defect. ‘Good works, which are the fruits of faith, are acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring necessarily out of a true and lively faith; insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by the fruit.’ Most true, in every word; yet one could wish the Article to lay its *closing* emphasis on the fact that practical holiness is not only the note of a true faith but its final cause, the very thing in order to which God has given it. It is to lively faith just what the fruit is to the tree. And the fruit is much more than the botanical label of the tree. It is the reason why the tree is in the fruit-garden at all. The tree is for the fruit.

But now, in a review quite brief but, as to its

points, as complete as we can make it, let us watch the resultant character and conduct of this specimen of New Testament Christianity, this man so rich in spiritual blessings in Christ, so perfectly mundane and commonplace as to circumstance in the world.

His first and most vital characteristic is gentleness, meekness, self-abnegating kindness. See iv. 1, and iv. 32. We must have noted this well and often; the sequence of ch. iv. 1 on the spiritual glories and wonders which close ch. iii. The disciple, if the Apostle's prayer is answered, is 'filled, up to all the fulness of God.' What will flow out of him? Spiritual pharisaism and self-importance? Not so. If he 'walks,' if he steps through common life, 'worthy of his calling,' in a character corresponding to the divine gifts of his conversion, it will be 'with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing others in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace'; and again, as one who is 'kind to others, tender-hearted, forgiving

them, as God in Christ did forgive him.' To sum up the matter in one supreme word, he 'walks in love' (v. 2), as one whom Christ has so loved that He 'gave Himself for him,' in the atoning sacrifice. This deep requisite to all holiness is not accidentally put first—this meek and humble kindliness which is in fact love in practice. It is of the inmost essence of the Gospel. For the Gospel above all things dethrones self-will and self-assertion, where it indeed enthrones Christ. So it lays a holy passivity deep at the root of all the activities of faith.

Meantime the man is no characterless and inoperative being because his Lord has laid him low in his own eyes. His walk of love is also a walk in 'the light,' of which he is 'a child' (v. 8), and the fruit of which he bears (v. 9). The very precept, 'Be ye angry and sin not' (iv. 26), allows, and indeed enjoins on him, in due place, a pure moral indignation, not for self but for right. And he is no babe in the sense of showing a purposeless and unthinking credulity; he is

to be ‘no more *vήπιος*, infantine, carried about with every wind of teaching, but in love living true,’ ἀληθεύων ἐν ἀγάπῃ (iv. 14). He ‘walks not as foolish but as wise’ (v. 15). With full regenerate will, using the power of his Lord in him, he ‘takes himself in hand’ for all that is right; he decisively (iv. 25) ‘puts away lying’; ‘puts away (iv. 31) *all* bitterness and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and railing, and malice.’ We note well the uncompromising decision, the holy power of expulsion, assumed here to be used by the regenerate man. His strength is wholly in God; his will is what grace has made it; yet it is as truly as ever *his will*. And we note again the absolute and summary exclusion from the Christian life of all that extensive class of sins which we so easily let pass as tolerable, but which are intolerable in Christ; the sins of tongue, of temper, of self-vindicating jealousies. They ‘have to go,’ and in Christ they can be commanded to go, out of the Christian life.

Just as decisively, the New Testament Christian

suppresses—in his Lord, in the power of his union and salvation in Him—all untruthful act and purpose. ‘He steals no more’ (iv. 28). And ‘greed’ (v. 3) is put quite away; words of a large reference in what they really cover. He allows ‘no putrid word,’ *λόγος σαπρὸς*, from his lips. The talk which trifles with impurity and plays with sin is absolutely over with him. ‘All uncleanness’ is dismissed from mention; and the hideous banter and raillery of profane allusions to it (v. 4), *μωρολογία καὶ εὐτραπελία*, are gone the same way. The man’s assurance of his salvation in the Holy One leaves him only the more awfully convinced that no impure life can possibly find place in the true ‘realm of Christ and of God’ (v. 5); and that the vainest of ‘vain words’ are those which would explain away the coming ‘wrath’ (v. 6), sure to fall upon ‘the sons of disobedience.’ He does not only even avoid the ‘unfruitful works of the darkness’ (v. 11); he ‘reproves’ them, *ἐλέγχει*, shows them up, by conduct marked and unmistakable, and,

where there is occasion, by faithful words. By a personal witness not self-righteous but righteous, he 'evinces' the dark and unclean hollowness of the life of sin.

Altogether, he 'walks accurately' (*ἀκριβῶς*, v. 15), thinking nothing unimportant in life, nothing outside the law of the Christian walk. He is covetous of occasion for God, and 'buys it out for himself,' *ἴξαγοράζεται* (v. 16), from the bondage of self-willing and world-loving use. He does so 'because the days are evil'; because, that is to say, he lives in a world of sin, and the circumstances of the hour will not *lend themselves* to his Master's use; his own unregenerate effort must *win* occasion from them.

His holy walk is not only negative, of course, but positive. He remembers (iv. 12) that however private his place, and in Church order however unofficial, though he be neither 'apostle, prophet, evangelist or pastor-teacher,' he yet has 'a work of ministry' because he is 'a limb of Christ'; he has his part and function in

'building up the Body.' In respect of temporal want around him he takes pains to be able (iv. 28) to 'give to him that needeth.' His talk is not only such as to do no harm ; it is aimed at the truest good ; by the grace of Christ it is a means of grace (iv. 29) ; 'good for edifying, for strengthening in Christ, as the need may be' (*πρὸς αἰχόδομὴν χρείας*), 'that it may minister grace to the hearers.' One beautiful use of voice he specially loves to make, in the sweet ordinance of Christian psalmody, twice enjoined by St Paul (here, v. 19, and in Col. iii. 16) as a normal thing in the Christian life ; surely not in public worship only, but in the home where Christ is Head. And over the man's whole life, like an echo of such 'psalms, and hymns, and spiritual odes, with song and instrument (*ψάλλοντες*), in the heart, unto the Lord,' runs the music of a thankfulness which sounds on in everything ; 'giving thanks always for all things unto our God and Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 20).'

It is a somewhat Puritan life, is it not? But none the less is it not beautiful with a light and colour quite heavenly in its cause, quite practical in its application? And is it, for our modern world, a mere daydream? No; even now, amidst the confusions of society and religion, amidst so much that is crude and blatant in the current life of the poor world and of the too often worldly Church, such lives are lived in Christ at this hour. There still exist such sanctuaries of homes, bright on occasion with smiles and sinless laughter, but quite innocent of words, of pursuits, of tone, of temper, that would make discord with the presence of Christ; full of the works of love, and of witness for Him Who is their secret.

The *home* of the New Testament Christian is the crown and perfection of this lovely picture. Truly, as I have said in one of our earlier readings, the Christian home is the masterpiece of the Gospel. And our day brings many a warning with it, as the world

sees the home more and more invaded from without and troubled by revolt from within, that nothing but the Gospel, nothing less than Christ, will finally secure home in its true existence at all. There is no *Ecolampadius*, no *Hausslicht*, no 'Homelight,' like the New Testament Christian. Separated in his Lord from the world, he is yet made tenderly amalgamable in his Lord towards every claim, every approach, every bond, every union, that Christ can sanctify.

I scarcely need remind you of the picture of the New Testament Home as here viewed in its details (v. 22—vi. 9). We have as it were seen with our eyes this Wife, in her conjugal loyalty, in the dignity which is involved for her in the reverent leadership of the Husband. We have seen this Husband, remembering at every turn the sanctity in Christ which surrounds his whole relation to the Wife:—'as the Lord loved the Church, and nourisheth and cherisheth it, aye, and gave Himself for it' so is his whole life

one of watchful, affectionate, *self-sacrificing* devotion to her whom Christ has joined to him, casting round their union the glory of the 'great mystery' of His own eternal Bridal. We have seen these Children, obedient, reverent, keeping willingly 'the first commandment with promise.' We have seen these Parents, scrupulously avoiding an irritating and tyrannic discipline, but in their heaven-given commission (there is no commission in the world more direct and more sacred) 'developing them (*ἐντρέπετε*) in the discipline and cautioning (*νουθεσίᾳ*) of the Lord.' Lastly, we have seen these Slaves, the Onesimi of these Philemons, their masters' conscious brothers in Christ, but all the more entirely and intelligently and nobly their servants in conscience; true as steel to duty, which they now find themselves elevated to do; recognizing in the menial task the glory of the will of God; doing it 'from the soul' here and now, and looking hereafter to the 'reward of the inheritance.' We have seen

these Masters, brought in Christ to find brothers and fellow-servants in their bondmen, and to drop for ever the accent of the domestic despot.

Space absolutely forbids me to dwell on that last noble phenomenon in the morals and polity of Christ, the apostolic treatment of domestic slavery. I can only in passing remark on the illustration given us in this instance of some of the deepest characteristics of the Gospel in its application of itself to the problems of society. We see here, what Goldwin Smith long ago remarked,* ‘the perfect freedom of the Gospel from the spirit of political revolution’; its entire abstinence from that setting of class against class which is a wanton incendiaryism in the house of the State. We see the absolute impartiality which speaks to each party, with equal explicitness, not about its rights but about its duties; only with more fulness and emphasis telling the stronger party about its

* *Does the New Testament sanction American Slavery?* (1863.)

duties to the weaker. And we see the call to them both to look beyond time to eternity for their motive and their law; to find in Christ, equally and always, the inspiring and enabling power for duty, in every detail alike of the simplest service and of the largest authority. So did the Gospel take a way, prescient as its Author, to abolish a tremendous evil, not through an untimely, unhallowed, pernicious appeal to passion, but through a spiritual transfiguration of the human parties in the matter.

The almost closing paragraph (vi. 10, etc.) seems even violent in its transition. From the Christian home, with its pure peace and love, its divine and human pieties, we seem, as in an antithesis to the vision of Dothan (*2 Kings vi.*), suddenly to see the New Testament Christian beleaguered with the personal powers of evil; ‘world-rulers of this darkness, spiritual things of evil in the heavenly world.’ Their leader lays his stratagems (vi. 11). His forces wrestle for the man’s fall, and aim darts of fire at the vitals

of his soul. And the believer meanwhile stands immovable and victorious, in a panoply of which every part (to quote St Jerome's comment here) is 'the Lord our Saviour;' 'by "all the arms of God" the Saviour is to be understood.' The Christian 'takes up' (*ἀναλαβεῖ*) Christ in His Truth, in His Righteousness, in His Blessed Hope, in His sure Word, and is safe in Him. He makes sure of the ground with 'feet shod with' Christ in His atoning and present 'peace.' So, 'having done all,' having wrought his Lord's will in his Lord's power, 'he stands,' erect and without a wound, in Him.

But *is* the transition violent? Surely not, in that spiritual truth of things which lies behind temporal phenomena. Where do the powers of darkness beset us? Most of all where by nature we are least on guard. And where is that? In the common day and hour; not least often amidst the unanxious liberties of home. There, if Christ is not in command, only too possibly the man may most freely wander out of Christ.

And out of Christ we are at once upon the enemy's own ground.

Here close our studies in the Epistle to the Ephesians. I will not waste words in explaining again what is obviously true, that the essay has been extremely fragmentary and in every respect imperfect. A few short readings on such a theme give room only for some suggestions upon some aspects of it.

But I trust we have not read this wonderful Letter together, even thus, without receiving some fresh and helpful impressions from it upon our spirits. We have at least found that it has in it that mysterious quality of Scripture ; you cannot touch the bottom of it, nor climb the height. Like the riches of Christ, like the plan of God, those vast things of which it speaks, it is *ἀνέξιχναστος*, unsearchable ; we cannot track the labyrinth in and out and all around ; it eludes us still, while it perpetually meets us ; there is always yet another path to be discovered, another

green vista, another holy bower with its shining temple of truth in the midst of it.

As Alford said of the Apocalypse, in the act of closing his exposition of it, and with it his great Commentary on the New Testament, so may we say here: ‘I commend to my gracious God and Father this feeble attempt to explain this glorious portion of His revealed Scripture. I do it with humble thankfulness, but with a sense of utter weakness before the power of His Word, and inability to sound the depths even of its simplest sentence.’

May this poor contribution to Scriptural study do something, however little, to quicken in us Christians, and especially in us Christian pastors, a consciousness of the sanctity and inexhaustibility of the Word of God written. May we evermore know this for ourselves, behind all our manifold work for the flock; then shall we, under God, quicken in them the holy curiosity of the true Bible-reader. And then,

and only so, will they with us, in these days of debate, rest calmly but immovably upon the rock of the Word, which abideth and also liveth for ever.

Renan, in the last pages of his *Saint Paul*, presumes to say that Paul, the narrow, the dogmatic, the intensely personal Paul, has in our century seen his reign come to an end. ‘Jesus,’ on the other hand (how repulsive to the believer is the sceptic’s humanitarian use of the blessed Name!) ‘Jesus’ maintains an immortal influence; He is ‘at the right hand of the Father’; words which must not be mistaken, however; Renan believed in no personal God at all. But why is He thus and there? Because, in the little we know of His person and His words, we find ‘the great Artist, the Man of the Ideal, the divine Poet.’ Nay, blessed be the God and the Father of our Lord, we know another Jesus Christ than only that, and we know another Paul than Renan’s travesty. We know the true Messenger and

862129

150

GRACE AND GODLINESS

[CH. VIII.

the eternal Message; we possess them as facts of history, as treasures of the heart. And we can never have done with the Messenger, because the Lord, Who is his Message, proves Himself in us to be our eternal Life.

THE END

COLSTON AND COMPANY, PRINTERS, EDINBURGH.



DATE DUE

TRINITY COLLEGE LIBRARY

45-2021

FEB 06 200

